The Strange Career of Dr. Wilkins

A Numismatic Inquiry

by

Q. David Bowers

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Introduction

My interest in Dr. Wilkins dates from about 1955, when as a young rare coin dealer I became interested in large cents. Not ordinary large cents, mind you, for although I liked these well enough, and certainly could admire a nice 1793 Wreath or other classic cent when I saw one, such coins were my stock in trade; items to be bought for one price and sold for another, hopefully making a profit along the way. No, the large cents which interested me were those which the uninitiated called "mutilated," and which those who were connoisseurs, or who were at least more polite, designated as "counterstamped."

In the "good old days," actually, in the good old, very old days, copper cents, of the type that numismatists would call "large" once the smaller-diameter cents made their appearance in circulation in 1857, were omnipresent on the American scene. No matter if a family was too poor to own a house, or a horse; chances are that they had, as the saying went, at least "two cents to rub together."

Such "large cents" circulated from the time that the first Chain-type cent was spent in the spring of 1793, until the Act of February 21, 1857 declared that these large coppers, which by that time had undergone numerous design changes, were simply too cumbersome for convenient everyday use. In reality, large cents circulated, although in diminished num-

bers, for many years thereafter. Actually, the fact that copper metal had been increasing in price during the decade of the 1850s had a lot to do with the discontinuation. Obviously, the government could make more money if it replaced the old-style 168-grain copper cents with new 72-grain cents made of copper-nickel alloy, and that is what happened.

During the era of large cent circulation, especially during the several decades from the 1820s onward, these most common of all United States coins were adapted as miniature billboards by patent medicine purveyors, silversmiths, makers of munitions, and others who impressed their names with metal punches on their surfaces. WHITTEN'S GOLDEN SALVE, seen on a copper cent, might prompt the viewer to part with the necessary sum to buy this nostrum. The political message VOTE THE LAND FREE, punched on numerous copper cents during the election campaign of 1848, undoubtedly persuaded some to cast their ballots for the Free Soil Party, whose candidate, Martin Van Buren, a former president, lost to Zachary Taylor, the Whig entry, in spite of the counterstamping activity. Nor was the use of such stamped messages limited to those with something to sell. Hundreds of individual people, most notably those who worked with metal or who had access to steel letter punches, imprinted their names on copper cents, perhaps "just for the heck of it," as one would carve his name on a birch tree.

Back in the 1950s I endeavored to read each and every back issue of *The Numismatist*, official journal of the American Numismatic Association, a publication which had its inception in 1888, when Dr. George Heath, a Monroe, Michigan physician, determined to issue a periodical to promote the exchange of information among coin collectors. I did not have access to the earlier issues, for they were and still are quite rare, so I began my reading with copies dated about 1900. Before long I encountered in a 1919 issue a serial article by F.G. Duffield, who submitted what he called a trial listing of countermarked coins of the world. Issues of

The Numismatist of 1919 and 1920 contained hundreds of his listings for foreign coins, with much attention being paid in particular to counterstamped coins of the West Indies. Finally, in 1921, United States coins were addressed. Duffield described many different counterstamps on denominations from half cents upward. Included in the August issue was a listing, his No. 1427: "U.S. Cents (various dates, countermarked 'DR. G.G. WILKINS' in a semicircle. Dr. Wilkins was of Philadelphia)."

It is not that the notation concerning Wilkins attracted any undue attention from me at the time, for it didn't. However, it is worth mentioning now as it is the first such listing I have been able to find printed in a serious numismatic study. There may have been earlier listings elsewhere, and, indeed, in the *Collector's Blue Book*, issue of May 1914, there is a mention of Dr. Wilkins, along with numerous other counterstampers, in an article written by F. Wayland Potter, editor of the publication. The commentary is worth reprinting here, for it tells of an early—perhaps the earliest—collector of such pieces and also indicates that among two bushels(!) of large cents looked through, only about 80 to 100 had been encountered with counterstamps, by the time the information was given to the editor of that long-ago hobby publication:

"Walter B. Gould, of Winterport, Maine, in a recent letter to the editor, says he has had copper cents ever since he was a small child, and before he knew what money was, or copper was, and thinks that copper is to him a magnet, or that he possesses a magnetism for coppers."

Gould was an early collector among many who have expressed an affection for time-worn large cents. In his magnum opus, *Early American Cents*, later retitled *Penny Whimsy*, Dr. William H. Sheldon wrote of the charm of early coppers and noted that, sooner or later, experienced numismatists, after trying other numismatic disciplines and specialties, had a way of returning to large cents. Sheldon

DR. G.G. WILKINS COUNTERSTAMPS

Counterstamps from the Large Letters punch on various United States large cents: (1) 1816; (2) 1817 15-Stars variety; (3) 1817 13-Stars variety; (4) 1818, with counterstamp at top of head, an unusual position; (5) 1818; (6) 1820; and (7) worn cent, circa 1820s, with counterstamp on lower part of the head.

When large cents were counterstamped with the Large Letters punch, Dr. Wilkins marked most pieces in the normal position in front of the face. Pieces which were well worn were candidates for marking in other locations, as evidenced by Nos. 4 and 7 here. This was hardly a rule, as Nos. 1 and 2 have the counterstamps in the regular position and were undoubtedly well worn at the time of marking. Nearly all known Wilkins counterstamps on coins are located on the obverse.

told of his boyhood days, when in front of a cheery fireplace his father would bring out a cigar box laden with worn coppers possessing all the color hues of autumn leaves. There was something undefinably warm and sentimental about such old cents; reminders of a happy, carefree era long since past and perhaps irretrievable except through the medium of daydreaming, with large cents serving as a catalyst. Continuing the 1914 article:

"At one time in the Maine woods several miles from any habitation he kicked several hundred of the U.S. copper cents out of an old rotten stump, where they had been for a great many years; this find was advertised at the time, but no one ever claimed the coins. He never knew, even, who owned the land the stump was on that held the coins.

"The most of these cents from that stump were dated before 1849, and a few were so much worn that the date cannot be seen.

"For years friends who had seen the cents he had in a showcase in his store would contribute now and then one or more as they happened to get them, and he received some from Eastport (Maine), Oregon, California, and many other places.

"Anyway, he has kept all that came to him and bought large lots, until he has now about two bushels altogether of this one kind of coin. For the last few weeks Mr. Gould and his family have worked spare time sorting dates and dies. We have found in those sorted so far between 80 and 100 that have names die-sunk on them. These names are generally plainly cut across either obverse or reverse. I will give them as they come. If anyone should recognize, or wish to obtain any of these cents with the following names, they can do so in exchange with Mr. Gould, for most any relic or coin worth a few cents:

"R.B. Arell, A.B. Seymore, 23 STEEL, E.B. Gilman, J.W. Strange, C.A. Strange, W.C. Webber, S.S.K. & C.N.C., D.C.S. & H.B.B., B.H. Woods, J. Haitt, H.F.C. & H.P.C., Frank E.

Thompson—Boston, T.J.S., E.E. Robbins, E. & R., U.S. VII, J. & G., F.J. Damon—Patent, V. Royal, B. Parker, E. McNamara, P. Fonan, N. Newton, L.S. Whe, F.J. Philbrook, Griswold & Co., CAST STEEL, G. Delano, I.E.B. & J.F.G.; USE G.G.G. & G.G.G.G., W.J. Scott, T.A.L., B. Parker, Norman—Boston, T.J. Gorgers, J.B.P., E.N.D., F. Bascom, C.F.C., J.M. Fardy, J.W., G.N. Melon, T.F.F.R., W.A., J.A. Allen, M. Wilson, D.N.D., 1801, Dr. G.G. Wilkins, W.W., L.N. Watts, W.D.J., H.K. Porter, J.R.B., CAST STEEL, E.B.H., NEW YORK, F.W., J. Hoyt Rowland, E.L. Fuler, J.F.G., C.A. Strange, Patten, B. Parker, G.C.C., J.O. Megquire, E.W.R., W.H., E.W. Loomis, J. Collett, CAST STEEL, N.B. Webb, C. Rich, O.J. Fitch, Orren Peavey, Devins & Bolton—Montreal, U.S.D. (both sides), and another B. Parker.

"The above cents are dated from 1818 to 1855, some of them are badly worn and date uncertain."

In continuing to read through issues of *The Numismatist* and other coin collecting publications, I found scattered mentions of counterstamped cents, but it was not until I came across an article by Maurice M. Gould in the July 1947 issue that I found a writer who seemed to enjoy the pieces as much as the similarly-surnamed Walter B. Gould did when he transmitted his thoughts in 1914 to the editor of the *Collector's Blue Book*.

Maurice Gould wrote: "One of the most fascinating phases of numismatics is collecting and attributing counterstamped coins. In this field United States large cents are of a special interest. It is not unusual to make finds of new varieties, due to the lack of interest in research in this particular series. In the past, this series has been sadly neglected, but recently more attention has been paid to them. Virtually all are scarce or rare except those which have been initialed by individuals. . . ." Among Gould's listings was: "DR. G.G. WILKINS. This is the most common variety, also found on copper-nickel and Flying Eagle cents."

Maurice M. Gould and Frank Washburn traded as Copley

Large Letters counterstamp boldly impressed on an 1829 cent, one of the highest-grade Wilkins-marked cents of this decade known to the author. It is believed that most counterstamping of large cents occurred during the late 1850s, using coins taken from circulation, at which time the pieces dated prior to the 1840s were for the most part well worn.

The hundreds of Wilkins-marked cents in existence today indicate that many thousands, or even tens of thousands, of coins were probably marked by him.

Coin Company and were located in an upstairs office on Boylston Street in Boston. In 1953, or perhaps it was 1952, I purchased my first mail order coin, and it was from Copley Coin Company. The price paid was $11 for a brilliant Proof Indian cent, not counterstamped or anything like that, of the year 1859. The coin was a dandy, and before long I was a steady Copley Coin Company customer.

Maurice Gould, who passed to his reward a decade or more ago, as did Frank Washburn, was the personification of "Mr. Nice Guy." Although being a professional numismatist was his vocation, and in the 1950s the average coin deal was apt to be well under $100, make that even under $10, and it was really hard work to make a living dealing in rare coins, it can be said truly that making a sale was secondary to Maurice Gould. Promoting the hobby and being a friend to all who knew him came first. Years later, he and his wife Jean moved to the West Coast, and Maury, as his friends called him, became a prominent fixture on the coin convention program circuit, giving innumerable after-dinner talks. He always liked me, was proud of the success, as it was, that I enjoyed, and delighted in telling his listeners that years earlier I had bought my first coin through the mail from him.

Anyway, sometime around 1955 I contacted Maurice Gould and told him that I had just read his article about counterstamped large cents which I found in an old issue of *The Numismatist*. I told him that I had discovered many varieties which he did not list, and he informed me that he, too, had found more types. I suggested that certain counterstamps looked like silversmiths' hallmarks to me, and I asked him if they could be such. "I don't know, but why don't you check it out?" he replied.

Armed with a commission of sorts from this respected authority on the subject, I tracked down reference books on silversmiths' hallmarks. Before long, I had attributed a dozen or so counterstamps to various silversmiths and goldsmiths. In a follow-up article on counterstamps in the July

1957 issue of *The Numismatist*, a decade after his original article, Gould noted that I was a "well-known dealer," which pleased me immensely (I was all of 19 years of age at the time), and that I had made these silversmiths' hallmark discoveries. To think of it, my "research findings" were being published in *The Numismatist*!

Before many more months transpired, Maurice Gould offered me his reference collection of counterstamped cents, which, in turn, contained numerous pieces he had acquired years earlier from the F.G. Duffield Collection, Duffield being the author of the 1921 article on the same subject in *The Numismatist*. I lost no time in acquiring the coins, and, in combination with the many counterstamped pieces I had acquired on my own, I now possessed about 600 to 800 different. These weren't just *any* counterstamps, for, unlike Walter B. Gould—he of 1914 *Collector's Blue Book* memory—I did not acquire pieces with stray initials. Rather, to qualify for inclusion in my collection, the counterstamp had to be of a name, business identification, geographical location, or design.

Over a period of time I realized that the two counterstamps encountered most often on large cents were DR. G.G. WILKINS, who had done his coin marking in Philadelphia according to F.G. Duffield, and another, this one with a positive geographical identity as it was part of the counterstamp: DEVINS & BOLTON, MONTREAL. I had dozens and dozens of coins of each of these two issuers. In addition to large cents, I came across numerous Flying Eagle and Indian cents with the Wilkins stamp, and many different coins and tokens with the Devins & Bolton identification, but being a "purist," I kept only the large cents. Years later, I realized the error of my ways, and I started keeping related pieces as well.

Back in the 1950s I couldn't find anyone except Maurice Gould who was interested in counterstamped cents, at least not as seriously as I was. Most of my dealer friends thought

the pursuit of counterstamped cents to be a waste of time, probably for such things were of trivial value, were not listed in any reference books, and no one ever expressed interest in collecting them; that is, no one except Maurice Gould and myself, and now that I had Maurice Gould's collection, that left me as a field of one.

There were some near-exceptions, and among large cent collectors and dealers I found a number of kindred spirits, if not fellow collectors, in a few people who knew what counterstamps were and sold or gave me what they encountered. I said "gave," and as unusual as this might seem now, back then a counterstamped large cent was considered mutilated and was a candidate for the proverbial "junk box." Many times at conventions, dealers would bring over one or several coins, give them to me, and say, "Add these to your collection." Which I did.

One dealer who expressed a special interest was Arthur M. Kagin, who at the time was associated with his brother Paul in the operation of the Hollinbeck Coin Company, based in Des Moines. They styled themselves as "the fabulous Kagins," and in the 1950s were always the biggest cash buyers at coin shows. Art liked things "with a story," as he put it, and such things included counterstamps. On occasion he sold me various cents for a dollar or two each. Once I had a duplicate of the famous 1824 counterstamp with Washington on one side and Lafayette on the other. Duffield related the enchanting tale that such pieces were made at the Philadelphia Mint by using a pair of small dies to counterstamp the center of cents and other coins and were given to Lafayette, French hero of the American Revolution, as mementos when he revisited the United States in 1824 and stopped by at the Mint. Duffield said there was also another version of their origin, and that was that the pieces were privately made and were tossed into Lafayette's path by citizens who watched the gala parades staged in his honor. I cannot imagine anyone throwing coins away in 1824, when

a cent was a cent, but that is how the story goes. Anyway, Art Kagin was familiar with the Washington-Lafayette counterstamp and paid me a nice price for my duplicate. Other than that sale, I don't recall ever selling a duplicate during my early days of collecting.

Another person interested in counterstamps was my close friend, Oscar Schilke. Oscar and Olga Schilke lived on the shore of Dodge Pond, in Niantic, Connecticut, and each summer I would drive to visit them, spending a few days and buying a few sets of coins for resale. Inevitably, he would have some counterstamped cents to give—not sell—me for my collection. Oscar related that for several decades he made a practice of conducting coin appraisals in bank lobbies. The banks would advertise that on such and such a day a coin expert would appraise coins free of charge. For the bank this meant additional lobby traffic and perhaps some new customers, and for Oscar this meant the opportunity to find some rare coins, although most shown to him were common. Along the way he purchased many counterstamped large cents. As these were not worth anything on the numismatic market, he simply set them aside. After a while, he developed an interest in counterstamps; not an interest sufficient to induce him to aggressively seek additional pieces, but enough to motivate him to casually pick up pieces here and there as he saw them at coin shows. Many of his better ones were sold to Maurice Gould years before I met Oscar, so when I bought Maury's collection I acquired these coins as well. On one visit Oscar sold me a beautiful Fractional Currency Shield which had been the property of a governor of Connecticut years earlier. It still decorates my office wall.

For a period of years during the 1960s and 1970s I set my interest in counterstamped coins aside, sold a number of pieces to a New Jersey numismatist, and acquired only a few others. Then, in the late 1970s I rekindled my interest, reac-

quired all of the coins I had sold earlier, and began adding new pieces.

In the meantime, a number of other collectors and dealers had become interested in counterstamped large cents. Kenneth Hallenbeck, an Indiana numismatist who later moved to Colorado Springs, wrote two articles on the subject for *The Numismatist* and had even proposed a numerical system for their classification. Russell Rulau gathered data on tokens and store cards, which was eventually included in a series of monographs issued by Krause Publications. The listing of counterstamped coins among tokens, and his considering counterstamps to be blood brothers of tokens, sharply increased interest. In Washington, Pennsylvania, located not far from Pittsburgh, Roy Van Ormer was busy assembling a comprehensive collection of counterstamps (in 1985 I purchased the large cent portion, comprising hundreds of pieces, and sold at auction the others—including the highlight of his cabinet, an 1857-S $20 counterstamped by J. Polhemus, a druggist in Sacramento, California in the later days of the Gold Rush in the 1850s).

A number of dealers found it worthwhile to add counterstamps to their inventories and auctions. Paul L. Koppenhaver, Kurt Krueger, H. Joseph Levine, Rich Hartzog, David L. Schenkman, Steve Tanenbaum (of Rossa & Tanenbaum), Charles Kirtley, Larry Elman, Mark Hotz, John J. Ford, Jr., and others all sold me significant pieces from time to time as did many collectors, Denis Loring, Chester L. Krause, and Alan V. Weinberg prominent among them. By the early 1980s counterstamped large cents were no longer giveaway items, nor had they been for a long time. Counterstamped cents with names, but unattributed as to location, were selling for $5 to $10 each or more, and it was not unusual for the stamp of a merchant, if of a scarce variety, to bring $50 to $100.

After "threatening" for a number of years to write a book on the subject of counterstamped large cents, I compromised

a bit and wrote a few brief articles, one in 1984 for my monthly column in *The Numismatist*, another as a chapter in a book titled *United States Copper Coins*, and a further article in *The Rare Coin Review.* And then there is this present book on what admittedly is an obscure variety within a specialized subject with a very limited appeal. Had the book been printed in 1957, probably the only customers for it would have been Maury Gould and myself, and, of course, I would have given Maury one free, which would leave the number of customers at none; that's zero.

Today, despite what you read in the coin papers, collectors are more enlightened, have more of that quality known as intellectual curiosity, and buy more books on their specialties than ever before, so hopefully, there will be a market, however limited, for the present essay. Besides, it is not the first book to be written about a single specialty. Eric P. Newman and Kenneth E. Bressett collaborated years ago to produce *The Fantastic 1804 Dollar*, a book which today remains one of the favorites in my library. Pete Smith has written a book on a single variety of the 1794 large cent, the Starred Reverse, listed as Sheldon No. 48. So, I will chalk up the present Wilkins book in the category of numismatic trivia. Who knows, perhaps if copies actually sell, I will produce essays on VOTE THE LAND FREE and a few other counterstamps which have piqued my interest. Watch out!

During the 1980s, Dr. Gregory Brunk, whose profession is teaching at an Oklahoma university, became interested in counterstamps and spent what must have equated to many hundreds of hours laboriously going through past articles, books, and sale catalogues, and looking at collections, in order to create a computerized listing of marks found on North American coins. In the summer of 1985, Gregory Brunk spent a week at my office taking notes on my collection. Our staff photographer, Cathy Dumont, later spent an equal if not longer time photographing what must have

DR. G.G. WILKINS COUNTERSTAMPS

Counterstamped cents, Large Letters style, of the 1830s: (1) 1830; (2) 1830 with stamp on the lower part of the head; (3) 1831; (4) 1832 with stamp at the top of the head; (5) 1835; (6) 1836 with stamp on reverse, an extremely unusual position. The obverse of the coin is damaged, and thus Wilkins may have considered it unsuitable for proper counterstamping; (7) 1837 with stamp at the top of the head; (8) 1837; and (9) 1839 with stamp at the top of the head.

been the best part of 1,000 pieces for his book, subsequently published by Rich Hartzog.

In the course of collecting counterstamped large cents, I have developed favorites. Among the most interesting to me are some of those already mentioned—the VOTE THE LAND FREE political issues, the common DEVINS & BOLTON, MONTREAL coins, the elusive and expensive Washington-Lafayette pieces, DR. SHATTUCK'S WATER CURE, WATERFORD, ME. (I visited Shattuck's former premises in 1983 and later wrote an illustrated essay on Shattuck's issues for *The Rare Coin Review*), and DR. G.G. WILKINS.

Among major issuers of counterstamps, Dr. Wilkins remained enigmatic. Although F.G. Duffield's article in the August 1921 issue of *The Numismatist* stated that Wilkins was from Philadelphia, searches of old Philadelphia directories failed to disclose any mention of him. The mystery, at least to his location, was solved when a cent was found not only with the usual DR. G.G. WILKINS stamp, but with an additional punch of PITTSFIELD, N.H.

From that point I knew that at one time Dr. Wilkins lived in Pittsfield, New Hampshire, but I had nothing in the way of further information. What type of doctor was he? Was he engaged in some sort of business, and why did he counterstamp large cents? These and other questions ran through my mind. Determined to learn as much as possible, I visited Pittsfield, which, by happy occurrence is located about 30 minutes by car from my own town of Wolfeboro, New Hampshire. I searched court, census, and other records, as did several people whose services I enlisted. I checked several dozen New Hampshire and New England directories. I looked through old newspapers and history books. Piece by piece, the story of Dr. Wilkins unfolded. I relate it here:

The "Hero of Fort Wilkins"

In the summer of 1860 Pittsfield, New Hampshire was an isolated community. Not yet served by rail, the village was located 15 miles by horse-drawn coach from the nearest town of importance, Concord, the state capital. Daily stages linked it not only with Concord to the west, but to Gilmanton, Alton, Dover, and Northwood in other directions. Primary in commercial importance in Pittsfield was the textile weaving factory, which had been erected in 1827 and which spun cotton yardage and made shirts, although not in sufficient quantity to even remotely compete with the huge mills located about 30 miles distant in Manchester, on the banks of the Merrimack River.

The census taker who visited Pittsfield in June 1860 was able to find record of 1,838 people. It was one of 16 communities in Merrimack County with a population between 1,000 and 2,000, with the only larger towns in the county being Hopkinton, with 2,178 souls, and Concord, with 10,896. Elsewhere in the state, Manchester, a textile manufacturing community whose Amoskeag mills were known worldwide, was the population leader with 20,107 residents.

The spiritual needs of Pittsfield residents were tended to by churches of the Congregational, Second Advent, and Freewill Baptist denominations, with the first enrolling the lion's share of community and business leaders. In the era

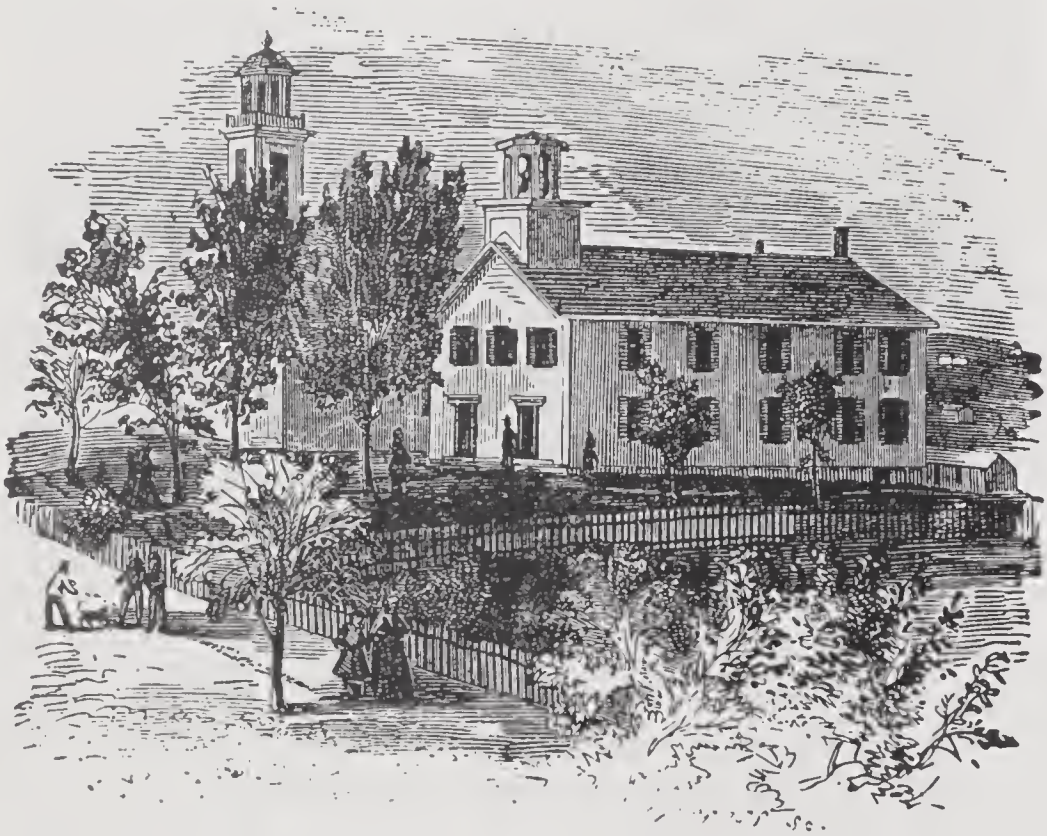
Overall view of Pittsfield, undated but probably from the turn of the century, showing the Suncook River in the foreground, a covered bridge, and various buildings.

before public high schools in the state were widespread, studies in the upper grades were conducted in the Pittsfield Academy, founded in 1830, which in 1860 had Scott French in the principal's office, Mary F. French as preceptress, and four teachers. Nearly a dozen grade schools took care of the younger students. At the time teachers' wages ranged from about $20 to $25 per month.

Financial institutions in the town numbered just two. The Pittsfield Bank, organized as a state bank on March 18, 1851, boasted a capital of $50,000 and, in 1859, paid a dividend of 6% to its stockholders. James Drake occupied the president's chair, while Josiah Carpenter served as cashier. In 1865 it became the Pittsfield National Bank. The other institution, the Pittsfield Savings Bank, was considerably more modest and in 1860 stated its "means" as $13,430.06, with a surplus of $412.96. Incorporated in 1855, at one time the bank occupied a room on the second floor over Hiram A. Tuttle's clothing store, and all of its assets were contained in a small iron safe measuring just 18 inches high. Tuttle, a director of the Pittsfield Savings Bank, entered politics in 1860, a year after he became of legal age, and was elected town clerk in an election which saw the Republicans upset the long-entrenched Democrats. Years later, in 1891 and 1892, he served a term as governor of the state. In Pittsfield his mansion and carriage house were and still are village landmarks.

Several doctors served the community in 1860. R.P.J. Tenney, dean of the town's physicians, was a fellow of the New Hampshire Medical Society. In addition, W.W. Proctor, A. Wares, and John Wheeler each had his share of patients. With a feeling of elation, I learned from the census records that practicing dentistry in Pittsfield was George G. Wilkins, who in June 1860 lived as a boarder at Drake's Hotel, an unpretentious establishment operated by Walter P. Drake, a hostelry which was no match for the much larger Washington House, a three-story wooden structure which was known

PITTSFIELD ACADEMY.



Calendar.

WINTER TERM	commences	MONDAY,	NOVEMBER 27, 1865.
SPRING TERM	"	"	FEBRUARY 12, 1866.
SUMMER TERM	"	"	MAY 14, 1866.
FALL TERM	"	"	AUGUST 27, 1866.

PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

— AT THE CLOSE OF THE —

Spring and Fall Terms.

A circular for the Pittsfield Academy gives the schedule for 1865-1866.

A trio of Dr. Wilkins' cents, Large Letters style: (1) 1838, with the counterstamp in the normal position, carefully aligned in front of Miss Liberty's face. (2) 1841, with the counterstamp in the normal position. (3) 1842, with the counterstamp at the top of the head. This position was used primarily on coins which were well worn at the time of marking. The vast majority of Wilkins' counterstamps on large cents are in the normal position in front of the face. A number of exceptions, such as this 1842, are shown on these pages but are not representative of their frequency of occurrence among the population of several hundred known cents bearing the Wilkins imprint.

far and wide. So, I now knew that the doctor was a dentist and his first name was George. In 1860 he could have been just about anything, for the title of doctor was used with reckless abandon, and many were the purveyors of patent medicines and other nostrums, hucksters who never saw the front door of a medical school, who styled themselves as one sort of a doctor or another.

Wilkins, a New Hampshire native, was 40 years old in 1860. The date of his arrival in Pittsfield is not certain, for most of the town records were destroyed in an 1876 fire, but it was probably sometime in the late 1850s, for the 1850 census does not report him there at the beginning of the decade, but he was there by 1860. It is known that he came from a large family and that his siblings included brothers Joel F., Manly W., James F., and Clark A., and sisters Marietta A. (who signed her name as Mariett) and Sarah S.

What academic qualifications, if any, George G. Wilkins had in the field of dentistry is not known. At the time, licensing was not required, and tooth filling and extraction was often practiced as an adjunct to barbering and hairdressing.

By 1860, and probably for several years before then, Wilkins advertised his trade by counterstamping coins in circulation, particularly those of the one-cent denomination. The marking was done by taking a metal punch with the inscription DR. G.G. WILKINS in a small arc, nearly a semicircle, carefully positioning it on the obverse of a coin placed on a small anvil, and hitting it with a hammer. Or, perhaps he had a small punch press of some sort, for surviving examples of his work were for the most part counterstamped with unusual sharpness and care.

One-cent pieces were ideal salesmen. In New Hampshire, as elsewhere in the northeastern part of the United States, cents were omnipresent in circulation, although, interestingly, coins of this denomination did not circulate in the West and were seldom seen in the South. Tens of millions of heavy "large" copper cents, of the general style minted

A group of Large Letters counterstamps of the 1840s: (1) 1843; (2) 1844, with stamp in normal position; (3) 1844 with stamp at the top of the head; (4) 1845, with first part of stamp lightly impressed; (5) 1846; (6) 1847, earlier counterstamped J. COLLINS, JR. multiple times. Wilkins, seeing that his normal area in front of Miss Liberty's face was already occupied, located his counterstamp behind Miss Liberty's hair; (7) 1847 cent, with Wilkins' counterstamp sharing space with a G.E. GILMAN imprint.

from 1793 to 1857, were still in circulation, although by June 30, 1860 some 13,274,100 pieces had been redeemed by the government in exchange for new, small Flying Eagle and Indian cents.

It is not difficult to imagine that Wilkins, a bachelor, had ample spare time to devote to marking what must have been many thousands, if not tens of thousands of coins. In terms of pieces known to numismatists today, cents bearing Wilkins' advertisement are more plentiful than are the counterstamped coins of any other issuer among the hundreds of tradesmen and private individuals known to have marked coins in the United States.

In his study completed in 1986, Dr. Gregory Brunk was able to locate several hundred Wilkins counterstamps in present-day collections. These were divided among the following regular United States host coins:

Large cents dated from 1800 to 1857: 190 pieces; Flying Eagle cents dated 1857 and 1858: 66 pieces; Indian cents dated from 1859 to 1865: 68 pieces; silver 3c piece, one dated 1853; half dimes dated from 1840 to 1857: 6 pieces; dimes dated from 1842 to 1857: 6 pieces; half dollar, one dated 1833. In addition a number of other coins and tokens bearing his mark were described: U.S. Hard Times token, circa 1833-1844, one piece; U.S. Civil War token, circa 1863, one piece; New Brunswick 1c, 1864, one piece; English halfpenny, unspecified, one piece; English threepence, 1838, one piece; Austrian kreuzer, 1816, one piece; Sumatra 4 kepings, 1804, one piece; (apparently an error; a combination of two listings—for an 1804 1/4 anna of the British East Indies Company and a circa 1831 copper keping of Singapore); Canadian 1c, 1859, one piece; French 5 centimes, date unspecified, one piece; French colonies 10 centimes, date unspecified, one piece; and a Spanish-American 2 reales, 1776. In addition, Dr. Brunk recorded the existence of 19 small-size United States cents, dates unknown.

The Brunk survey included some but not all examples of

Various cents of the late 1840s and the 1850s with Dr. George G. Wilkins' Large Letters counterstamp.

Dr. George G. Wilkins' Large Letters counterstamp on an 1858 Flying Eagle cent. The curvature of the letters in the Large Letters stamp closely approximates the curvature of the border of the new copper-nickel cent format (introduced into circulation in 1857), indicating that Wilkins' punch may have been created about this time. Had the punch been created earlier, in the era before February 1857 when large cents were being produced, the curvature probably would have been different. The curved alignment of the Large Letters punch fits comfortably on a Flying Eagle cent, as illustrated here, but somewhat awkwardly on earlier large cents.

Several copper-nickel Flying Eagle and Indian cents, 1857 to 1863, with the Large Letters counterstamp. The second of two 1857 Flying Eagle cents shows an incomplete and double-punched counterstamp, an unusual situation, for Wilkins' marks are usually very carefully impressed.

Half dimes dated 1855 and 1857, and an 1842 dime, with Wilkins' Large Letters counterstamp. Although most known Wilkins stamps are on cents, silver denominations from the three-cent piece to the half dollar are known with his imprint.

A Hard Times token dated 1834, with the Wilkins' Large Letters counterstamp above Andrew Jackson's portrait; and a Large Letters imprint on a circa 1840s store card of John J. Adams, a Taunton, Massachusetts merchant.

Wilkins counterstamps in the collection of Steve Tanenbaum. A prize piece in the Tanenbaum Collection, the latest-dated Wilkins counterstamped coin known to exist, an 1873 Indian cent, was not recorded by Dr. Brunk, possibly because Brunk surveyed the collection before Steve Tanenbaum acquired the coin.

At least six large cents are known with Wilkins' counterstamp on the obverse and with the additional date or number "1876" on the reverse. It may have been the case that these large cents, whose dates range from 1817 to 1854, may have been so stamped in the 1876 centennial year.

From Dr. Brunk's listing and from additional coins observed by the author, it can be concluded that Dr. George G. Wilkins primarily counterstamped cents, but that occasionally other United States denominations as well as foreign coins were so marked.

Counterstamping continued until at least 1873, as evidenced by a marked 1873 Indian cent, and may have continued as late as 1876, however most counterstamping was done prior to 1866, for, with the exception of the 1873 cent and a few cents marked "1876," all of the hundreds of known counterstamped coins are of earlier dates.

Counterstamps of Dr. George G. Wilkins exist in two major styles, as first identified by Steve Tanenbaum:

Type I, or "Large Letters": With DR. G.G. WILKINS in letters noticeably larger than the following, and arranged in an arc which is nearly a semicircle. The author believes the Type I counterstamp punch was employed from 1857 or 1858 through the year 1863. The curvature of the arc on the Large Letters counterstamp suggests that it may have been specifically made to mark cents of the new Flying Eagle design, which appeared in circulation begining in 1857. The stamp was also used on many other issues in circulation at the time, including earlier-dated large cents, but on these issues the counterstamp does not appear to be "made to fit."

An 1859 Indian cent with Wilkins' Large Letters counterstamp. This design, first issued for circulation in 1859, did not accommodate the Large Letters punch very well, as the illustration shows. The author believes that the Large Letters punch was created in 1857 or 1858 for use on Flying Eagle cents (but was used on many other coins as well, especially large cents) and was continued in service through 1863, after which time it broke or was discarded. When a replacement punch was created, circa 1864, it was of the Small Letters type and was curved in a shorter arc, appropriate for imprinting in the field of an Indian cent between UNITED STATES and the Indian's face.

A Spanish-American 4 reales piece, 1776, of the Lima (Peru) mint, displays the Large Letters counterstamp on the obverse. Such silver coins circulated in quantity until 1860, after which time they were no longer redeemed by the United States government.

British East India Company 1/4 anna copper coin, 1804, with the Large Letters counterstamp on the reverse. During the late 1850s, just about any world coin made of copper, and of the approximate diameter of an American cent, traded in the channels of commerce at the value of one cent.

French copper-alloy 5 centimes, date worn away, but of Charles X (1824-1830), with Wilkins' Large Letters stamp. Such coins were among the various world coins which were used in American commerce through the late 1850s.

Austrian 1 kreuzer copper piece, 1816. Wilkins' Large Letters counterstamp is shown in an inverted position at the bottom of the shield motif, apparently the location Wilkins thought would most comfortably accommodate the punch.

Dr. G.G. Wilkins' Large Letters stamp on the obverse of an 1838 Queen Victoria silver threepence of England, a coin which probably passed in circulation at the value of five cents, for it is sized similarly to a half dime.

Type II, or "Small Letters": With DR. G.G. WILKINS in smaller letters than the preceding, and in a shallow arc which approximates a third of a circle. The author believes that the Small Letters stamp was created about 1864, after the earlier punch was broken or discarded, and that the Small Letters punch may have been made expressly for use in marking Indian cents in the obverse field between the inscription UNITED STATES and the Indian's face. The arc and size seem to have been "made to fit.' This punch was used to counterstamp Indian cents as well as earlier-dated large cents, a few foreign coins, and other pieces in circulation during the period from 1864 to 1876. A related counterstamp, with letters of the same size and in a similar arc, with the inscription PITTSFIELD, N.H. was apparently made at the same time and appears on a few of the coins marked with the Type II punch. In at least one instance, on an 1858 Flying Eagle cent, the PITTSFIELD, N.H. punch appears alone.

Coins with the Type II countermark are considerably rarer than are those with the Type I stamp. Dr. Brunk did not differentiate the two types of letters in his study. An analysis of the pieces in the author's collection, which includes the collection formed by Steve Tanenbaum (purchased in January 1987), covers a number of specimens unknown to Dr. Brunk. The distribution is as follows:

Type I, Large Letters: United States large cents: 1816, 1817 (3 pieces), 1818 (5), 1820, 1825, 1828, 1829 (2), 1830 (2), 1831 (3), 1833, 1834, 1835 (4), 1836, 1837 (10), 1838 (6), 1841 (2), 1842 (2), 1843, 1844 (5), 1845 (3), 1846 (3), 1847 (5), 1848 (7), 1849 (3), 1850 (4), 1851 (3), 1852 (2), 1853 (10), 1854 (4), 1855 (4), 1856 (4); U.S. Flying Eagle cents: 1857 (10), 1858 (12); U.S. Indian cents: 1859 (10), 1860 (4), 1861, 1862 (5), 1863 (2); U.S. half dimes: 1842, 1855, 1857; French 5 centime piece, date not visible; 1816 Austria kreuzer; 1804 British East India Company 1/4 anna; Hard Times tokens circa 1833-1844 (2); Canadian tokens: 1813, 1844, 1845; 1858 Cana-

Canadian halfpenny token, Breton No. 994, dated 1813.

New Brunswick halfpenny token, Breton No. 910, dated 1843.

Quebec copper halfpenny token, Bank of Montreal, 1844. Breton No. 527.

Regular issue Canadian silver 10c piece, 1858, from the first year of the Canadian decimal coinage.

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New Hampshire, the northern boundary of which touches Canada, saw the circulation of many Canadian tokens and coins. Accordingly, more Canadian coins are known with Wilkins' counterstamps, usually of the Large Letters variety as shown here, than are coins of any other foreign nation.

After the passage of the Act of February 21, 1857, which provided that foreign coins would no longer be legal tender in the United States, the circulation of Canadian copper tokens soon ended, but Canadian decimal coins of regular issue continued to circulate in New Hampshire, as, indeed, they have down to modern times.

dian 10c; 1776 Lima (Peru) Spanish-American two reales; 1838 British silver threepence.

Type II, Small Letters: U.S. large cents: 1816, 1817 (with 1876 stamped on reverse), 1825, 1835, 1836, 1844 (with 1876 stamped on reverse), 1845 (with 1876 stamped on reverse), 1846, 1848 (2), 1852, 1853, 1854 (with PITTSFIELD, N.H.), 1855 (with PITTSFIELD, N.H.) (2); U.S. Flying Eagle cents: 1857, 1858 (2); U.S. Indian cents: 1860, 1864, 1865 (3), 1873; 1863 Civil War tokens (2); copper keping of Singapore A.H. 1247 (circa 1831-1832 A.D.); 1859 Canadian cent (with PITTSFIELD, N.H.). In addition, an 1858 Flying Eagle cent has PITTSFIELD, N.H. but no mention of Wilkins; the coin mentioned earlier.

Until I began saving Flying Eagle and Indian cents with the Wilkins stamp, and this is something I did not do until the 1970s, I ignored all small cents offered to me. I also overlooked the chance to purchase additional specimens of large cent dates I already possessed, unless the counterstamp was in an unusual position, instead of its regular placement in front of Miss Liberty's face. Steve Tanenbaum, who buys and sells tokens and medals as a profession, over a period of years disposed of all of his duplicates and kept just one coin of any given date or type for his personal collection. Thus, the preceding list is not a true indication of the number of Wilkins counterstamps known for a given date. If anything, large cents of the 1840s and 1850s and, in particular, 1857 and 1858 Flying Eagle cents and 1859 Indian cents, are much more plentiful than the roster of my collection indicates.

As Wilkins counterstamped many United States large cents, and as Wilkins' counterstamping activity is believed to have begun in 1857 or 1858, after large cents were no longer being minted, it is useful to discuss the availability of the old-style large cents during this later period. How easy was it for Dr. G.G. Wilkins to find large cents during the

A comparison of two Indian cents shows the Large Letters counterstamp (left), believed to have been used through the year 1863, and the new Small Letters counterstamp, believed to have been used from 1864 onward.

The author believes the Large Letters punch was used from 1857 or 1858 until 1863. It was employed to mark a wide variety of coins then in circulation, including large cents of the early 19th century, American silver coins, tokens, and a wide variety of foreign issues. The Small Letters punch is believed to have been used from 1864 to 1876 and is known primarily on large cents (which could be found with ease in circulation through the 1870s) and Indian cents. Additional imprints are known on Civil War tokens (mostly issued in 1863 and circulated for many years afterward), on Canadian decimal coins (which circulated in New Hampshire at the time), and a few stray other issues; but the coins counterstamped with the Small Letters punch are not nearly as diverse as those imprinted earlier with the Large Letters punch, when many different world coins were common in the channels of United States commerce.

1857-1863 span, when it is believed that the Large Letters punch was employed?

The Act of February 21, 1857 provided for the elimination of the old copper cent of 168 grains weight: "From and after the passage of this act, the standard weight of the cent coined at the Mint shall be 72 grains, or three twentieths of an ounce troy, with no greater deviation than four grains in each piece; and said cent shall be composed of 88% copper and 12% nickel, of such shape and device as may be fixed by the Director of the Mint. . . ."

Until this time, foreign coins of nearly every description served in the channels of commerce. Particularly prevalent were the silver coins of Mexico, Peru, and other Spanish-American countries. The silver one-real coin, or bit, was worth twelve and a half cents, with the 2-real or "two bit" piece valued at a quarter dollar, the 4-real coin at a half dollar, and the 8-real issue trading for the value of a dollar. British silver shillings, although worth less, often were received in commerce for a quarter dollar, and the copper, silver, and gold issues of various other countries all played a part in the American mercantile system.

During the early 19th century the use of foreign coins was a matter of necessity, for the Philadelphia Mint, which commenced operations in 1792, had not yet produced enough coins to satisfy commercial needs. In general, foreign copper coins and tokens approximating the size of a United States cent circulated at that value, any foreign silver coin nearly the size of a quarter dollar was received in change for that amount, and so on. However, by 1857 enough federal coins and privately-issued banknotes were in circulation that foreign coins were no longer needed.

The Act of February 21, 1857 provided for redemption of Spanish American coins at a value less than that at which the pieces had often traded earlier: ". . . the pieces commonly known as the quarter, eighth, and sixteenth of the Spanish pillar dollar, and of the Mexican dollar, shall be receivable

The Small Letters counterstamp, applied after 1863, as seen on various earlier-dated large cents: (1) 1816; (2) Cent, worn nearly smooth and with date not visible, of the style introduced in 1816. The counterstamp is on a large blank area of the reverse, the location which Dr. Wilkins judged to be the best to receive the mark; (3) 1835; (4) 1846; (5) 1848; (6) 1852; (7) 1853.

at the Treasury of the United States, and its several offices, and at the several post-offices and land-offices, at the rates of valuation following—that is to say, the fourth of a dollar, or piece of two reales, at twenty cents; the eighth of a dollar, or piece of one real, at ten cents; and the sixteenth of a dollar, or half real, at five cents." Apparently, other foreign coins were not officially redeemed. These other pieces, if made of silver or gold, found a ready market with bullion dealers and banks, who published weekly lists of buying rates for popularly traded issues.

The Act specified that the new small cents (which were subsequently produced with the Flying Eagle design) be issued in exchange for lawful gold and silver coins of the United States and "also in exchange for the former copper coins issued. . . . And it shall also be lawful for the space of two years from the passage of this act, and no longer, to pay out at the Mint the cents aforesaid for the fractional parts of the dollar hereinbefore named, at their nominal value of twenty-five, twelve-and-a-half, and six-and-a-quarter cents respectively." In other words, the government would exchange a 2-real Mexican coin for 25c in exchange for new one-cent pieces, but the same coin would be received for just 20c in other (silver or gold) coins. The object was to promote the acceptance and circulation of the new Flying Eagle cents. Earlier, in 1856, hundreds of pattern Flying Eagle cents were distributed to congressmen, newspaper editors, and others of influence to smooth the way for the new, light weight cent style—a publicity campaign unprecedented in the annals of the Treasury Department.

On March 3, 1859 an act was passed which provided that the redemption of foreign coins in exchange for cents was to be extended for two years beyond February 21, 1859 (the deadline specified in the Act of February 21, 1857). However, on June 25, 1860 this provision was repealed. Thus, until June 25, 1860, specified foreign coins could be exchanged without loss for newly minted United States one-cent pieces.

Dr. George G. Wilkins' Small Letters counterstamp on the obverse of an 1833 half dollar, the largest denomination so counterstamped, so far as the author has knowledge. Such coins were not in general circulation during the decade after 1864 when the Small Letters punch was primarily employed, so perhaps this half dollar represents the counterstamping of a stray memento or souvenir.

The director of the Mint submitted the following statement in connection with his report covering the fiscal year ending June 30, 1859:

"Prior to the passage of the Act of February 21st, 1857, a large portion of the circulation of silver coins consisted of the Spanish and Mexican fractions of the dollar. One of the objects of that law was to retire these coins from circulation. This has been in a great measure attained. They have ceased to circulate in most states of the Union and are rapidly disappearing from such distant parts of our country where they are tolerated. Our circulation is thus being rid of a foreign currency which interferes with our own excellent system of decimal coinage and accounts. It is to be hoped that this reform in our circulation will lead people to adopt the language of our system, and abandon terms which are absurd, and would be ridiculous if they were not so common. I especially refer to the term 'shilling,' which never had a place in our coinage, and which was variable as a term of account in different localities during our colonial existence. Since the passage of the acts referred to, the Mint has received and melted Spanish and Mexican fractions of a dollar to the amount of $1,620,997, of which the value of $546,305 was deposited in exchange for cents of the new issue. For this latter purpose also we have received copper coins of the former issue to the amount of value, by tale, of $95,241."

In his report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1860, the director of the Mint reported that redemptions of Spanish and Mexican coins continued apace, "and thus the community has been relieved from an irregular and depreciated currency." However, this caused a problem of a different sort; too many cents: "It has required the issue of a large amount of cents, and induced a temporary redundancy of that coin in some of the eastern cities. They are gradually, however, being distributed to all parts of our country, including a portion of the southern states, where the copper cent was scarce-

Two 1855 cents of the rare style with two separate counterstamps: the usual DR. G.G. WILKINS stamp, of the Small Letters style (as employed after 1863), and the seldom used PITTSFIELD, N.H. stamp, believed to have been made at the same time as the Small Letters stamp. The PITTSFIELD, N.H. imprint is sufficiently rare that one prominent early student of counterstamped coins was not aware of its existence, and attributed Wilkins' location as Philadelphia.

The cent shown to the right has the additional counterstamp J.R., which is not related to Wilkins.

ly known as a circulating medium. Since the passage of the Act of 25 June 1860, the issues have been limited to exchanges for the copper cents, except this supplying of the government offices with the new issue, and distant parts of the country in limited amounts. In order to accelerate the process of relieving the community from the cumbrous and inconvenient copper cents, the Mint now pays the expenses of transportation on them, and will make returns in the new issues. This arrangement will tend to relieve the country from a burdensome currency, without increasing the amount of circulation of that denomination of coins."

It is thus evident that from 1857 or 1858 until the summer of 1860, the first several years in which Dr. Wilkins used the Large Letters counterstamp punch, he would have had no difficulty placing his mark on earlier-dated large cents and foreign coins of many descriptions then in circulation.

After June 25, 1860, nearly all foreign coins disappeared from commercial channels. An exception was provided by Canadian coins, the decimal issues first minted in 1858, which circulated widely in the northern New England states of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine.

In April 1861 the Civil War began with the bombardment of Fort Sumter. For over a year, all went well with the monetary system in the North, and the needs of commerce were served by privately-issued banknotes, the new federal "greenback" currency issues, and an ample amount of coins from cents to $20 gold pieces. However, by the summer of 1862 the outcome of the war was in doubt, and even the most patriotic citizen was tempted to hoard "hard" coins in preference to paper money. Gold and silver coins disappeared from circulation, followed eventually by one-cent pieces. Many silver coins were sent to Canada, where they were sold for a premium, but most coins simply went into hiding. By the second week of July 1862, $100 worth of silver coins could be sold for $108 in federal "greenbacks." Ferries, street cars, barbershops, restaurants, and other businesses requiring

small change were in dire straits. Soon, various types of emergency money appeared, including the use of federal postage stamps as currency, privately-issued bronze cent-size tokens, little paper cardboard chits of various denominations from one cent to 50 cents, and John Gault's innovative idea of mounting postage stamps in mica-fronted brass cases. Eventually, the Treasury Department issued paper notes in fractional denominations in place of coins. The story of the many substitutes which appeared in circulation when coins were being hoarded forms one of the most interesting chapters in American numismatics.

In Pittsfield, New Hampshire, as elsewhere, coins were scarce in circulation, and it is presumed that from the summer of 1862 until federal cents once again became plentiful in circulation in 1864, Dr. George G. Wilkins' counterstamping activities were minimal. Thus, while his Large Letters punch was used through the year 1863, very little use of it was made after 1861.

With the advent of the new two-cent bronze coins in 1864, the acceptance of federal fractional currency paper notes, and a generous coinage of Indian cents, the crisis in small change was ended. Around this time, Wilkins commenced using his new Small Letters punch. However, it was not until the 1870s that silver coins were once again seen in general circulation. Beginning in 1864, many of the old large cents came out of hiding and were spent, particularly outside of the major cities. Indeed, large cents circulated as late as the 1870s, as evidenced, for example, by the Mint report stating that from March 27, 1871 to June 30, 1873, some 3,549,539 large cents were redeemed in exchange for other coins. In the meantime, many United States large cents also circulated in Canada.

It is evident that Dr. George G. Wilkins would have had no difficulty obtaining large cents for counterstamping with his Small Letters punch as late as the 1870s, but that with

the exception of Canadian coins, few foreign coins circulated in New Hampshire after June 1860.

In the years after 1860, Dr. Wilkins continued to pursue his dental practice. Although dozens of Pitsfield citizens, mostly aged from their late teens to thirties, served in the Civil War, Wilkins was not among them. Presumably, he stayed home and continued extracting molars, taking time now and then to engage in counterstamping. However, as most known Wilkins-marked coins are from the Large Letters punch, and as this punch is believed to have been used from 1857 or 1858 until 1863, but mostly through 1860 (for relatively few coins dated from 1861 to 1863 are known from the Large Letters punch), it is probable that most of his counterstamping occurred during just three or four years, from 1857 or 1858 to 1860.

After the coin shortage of 1862-1863 ended, Wilkins apparently had less enthusiasm for marking coins, and many fewer were stamped with his new Small Letters punch, which he began using in 1864. It may have been that he felt the need to add a geographical inscription to identify his location, so the separate PITTSFIELD, N.H. punch was made. However, seemingly he had little patience to apply two separate stamps to a single coin, so the PITTSFIELD, N.H. punch was used infrequently. The author theorizes that the PITTSFIELD, N.H. punch was intended to be stamped in the right obverse field of an Indian cent, between the headdress feathers and OF AMERICA, but in practice there was not enough open space in this area of the coin to permit the counterstamp to be impressed clearly. No Indian cents so stamped are known to the author.

In 1860, Wilkins told the census taker that he had no assets of note. This, plus his residence in a modest room in Drake's Hotel, indicates that he was hardly a man of means.

By 1866 his assets had increased, or perhaps he secured a good credit rating, for on August 10th of that year he purchased for $950 from Lowell Brown and his wife Hannah

Small Letters stamp on an 1857 Flying Eagle cent.

1858 cent with Wilkins' stamp carelessly aligned.

A highly unusual coin showing the PITTSFIELD, N.H. stamp, but without mention of Dr. Wilkins. It is presumed that this is a trial impression or was made in error, for it would have served no purpose to Wilkins.

Small letters imprint on an 1860 cent.

Small letters imprint on an 1864 bronze cent.

Civil War tokens, circa 1863, with the Small Letters counterstamp. During 1863 and part of 1864, when federal coins were being hoarded, these private tokens filled the need for small change.

A copper keping coin of Singapore, dated A.H. 1247 (c. 1831-1832 A.D.); reverse dated 1242.

a parcel of land and buildings on Main Street, beginning at the northeasterly corner of the Congregational Church, a piece of ground measuring about 30 by 63 feet. On November 1, 1869 he paid $100 to Addie H. Robinson, wife of Henry L. Robinson, for an irregularly-shaped piece of land measuring about 74 by 36 by 54 by 33 feet, on which he planned to build a stable. Other real estate acquisitions were also made.

In the meantime, Wilkins continued his dental profession. The 1868 edition of The *New England Business Directory* lists him as one of two dentists in Pittsfield, the other being C.C. Chesney. Chesney's office was located above William A. Mack's pharmacy in the Central Block, until it burned in 1873, and then above Hiram A. Tuttle's store on Main Street, until that building was destroyed by fire on February 14, 1876.

During the late 1860s, plans were being laid to link Pittsfield by rail to the outside world. Although proposals for a railroad had been made as early as 1848, nothing came of the idea. Finally, on April 26, 1869, ground was broken at Pittsfield and Suncook, and by November 27th of the same year both communities were joined by rail, with the first train traversing the tracks on December 6th. The Suncook Valley Railroad, which on November 11, 1870 became part of the Concord, Manchester & Lawrence Railroad, ushered in a new era of prosperity, and for a time the economy of the town boomed.

In 1870, by which time the population of Pittsfield had declined to about 1,600 people, investors from Lynn, Massachusetts financed a factory facility which measured 210 feet in length by 35 feet in width, and was of three-story height. The building was subsequently occupied by three separate companies, which employed between 350 and 400 workers to make shoes.

Merchants and other townspeople were very optimistic, new streets were laid out, and new commercial buildings

A bronze 1865 Indian Head cent with the Small Letters counterstamp. After about this time, Wilkins' counterstamping efforts must have been minimal, for few later-dated coins are known with this marking. Sometime in the late 1860s, Wilkins tired of dentistry as his main profession and took up several additional trades, primarily that of saloonkeeper.

erected. All went well for five or six years after 1870, after which time labor and shipping troubles arose at the shoe factory, and one by one the three companies shut down. The situation was made worse by the generally poor economic conditions which prevailed throughout the United States, beginning in 1877. Finally, help came in 1879, when C.B. Lancaster, a successful shoe manufacturer, offered to set up a branch in Pittsfield if the town would erect a building to his specifications and give him a tax abatement for a number of years. Agreement was reached, and during the early 1880s some 400 workers were employed at the new facility. Prosperity returned to Pittsfield.

Meanwhile, the original shoe factory building, abandoned for a time, was put into use by a new firm, Morgan, Dore & Libby, composed of Morgan & Dore, a Lynn (Massachusetts) firm, and E.A. Libby, one of their employees who had experience as a superintendent. During the early 1880s the firm employed about 250 people.

In the late 1860s, the only hostelry of importance in Pittsfield was the Washington House, also called the Washington Hotel, which seemed to change proprietors every several years. The structure was still standing in the 1980s. John L. French, cashier of the Pittsfield Bank, was the town's leading appraiser and auctioneer. Lewis Bunker plied the trade of cabinetmaker, chair maker, and, on occasion, coffin maker and undertaker. The town druggists were Newell G. Tilton, who sold medicine in conjunction with his general store, and William A. Mack, whose young daughter Nellie was a student at the Academy and who later in the decade earned money as a nurse. An observer in 1875 reported that Pittsfield had four churches, one high school, the separate Pittsfield Academy, a fine town hall, two banks, numerous professional offices, about 20 stores, three shoe factories, one cotton factory (the Pittsfield Manufacturing Co.), a grist mill, a saw mill, and about 200 private residences. Yearly production of the town's manufacturing enterprises was reported

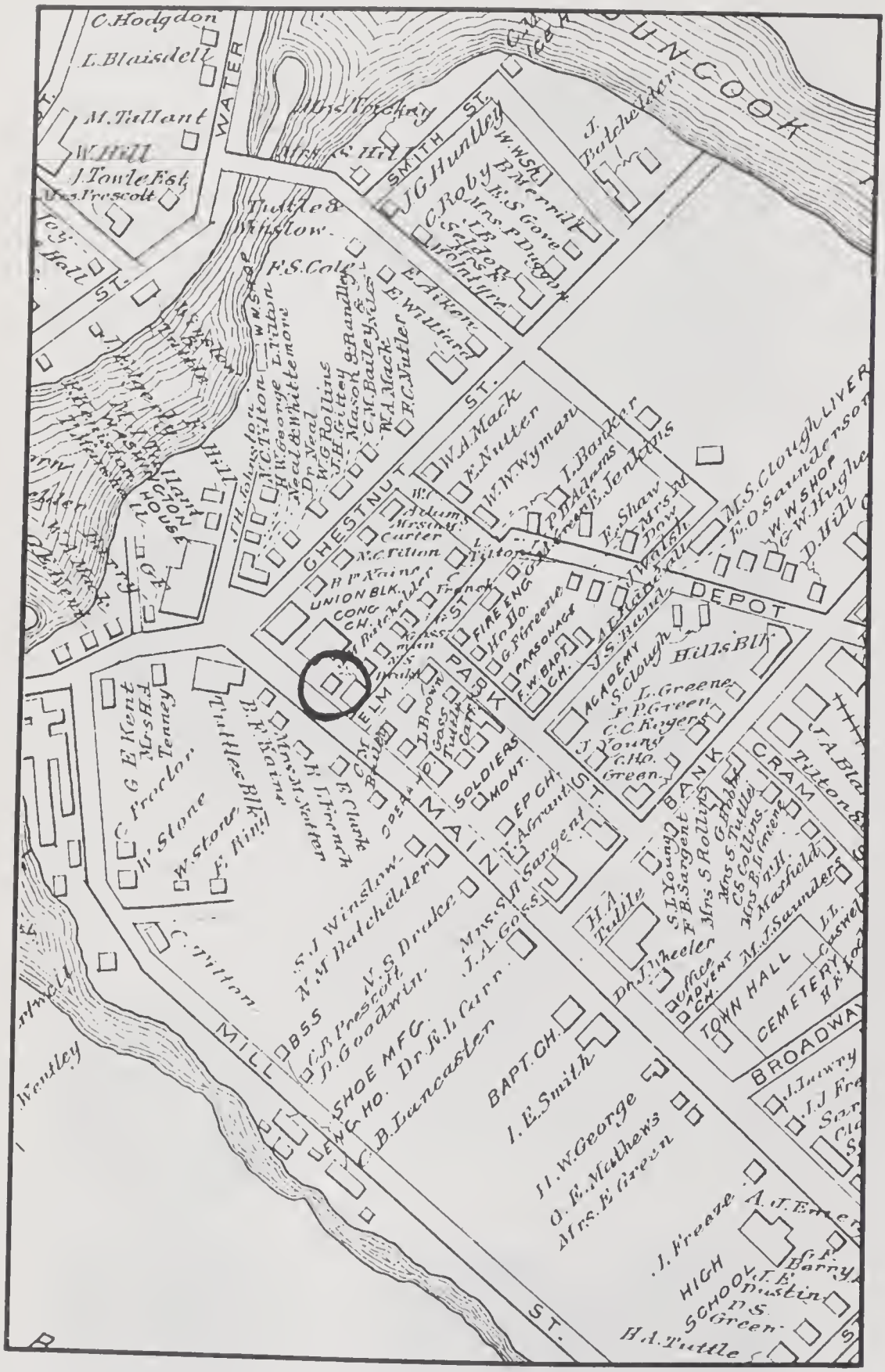
An 1873 Indian cent with DR. G.G. WILKINS imprinted by the Small Letters counterstamping punch, proving that Wilkins, was still marking coins (although in very limited numbers) at the time. Until this coin was located by Steve Tanenbaum in the 1980s, students of counterstamped coins were not aware of the Wilkins imprint on any coin dated after 1865.

as 600,000 pairs of shoes, over 2,000,000 yards of cotton cloth, 7,000 (sic) shingles, 500,000 board feet of lumber, and 9,000 (sic) shoe boxes. Three years earlier, in 1872, parts of the town had been laid waste by a fire, followed by another fire in 1873. In 1876, still another fire consumed many important buildings in the downtown section, including the Congregational Church, Hiram A. Tuttle's block, and the town hall. The population of Pittsfield at the time was stated as 1,690 persons.

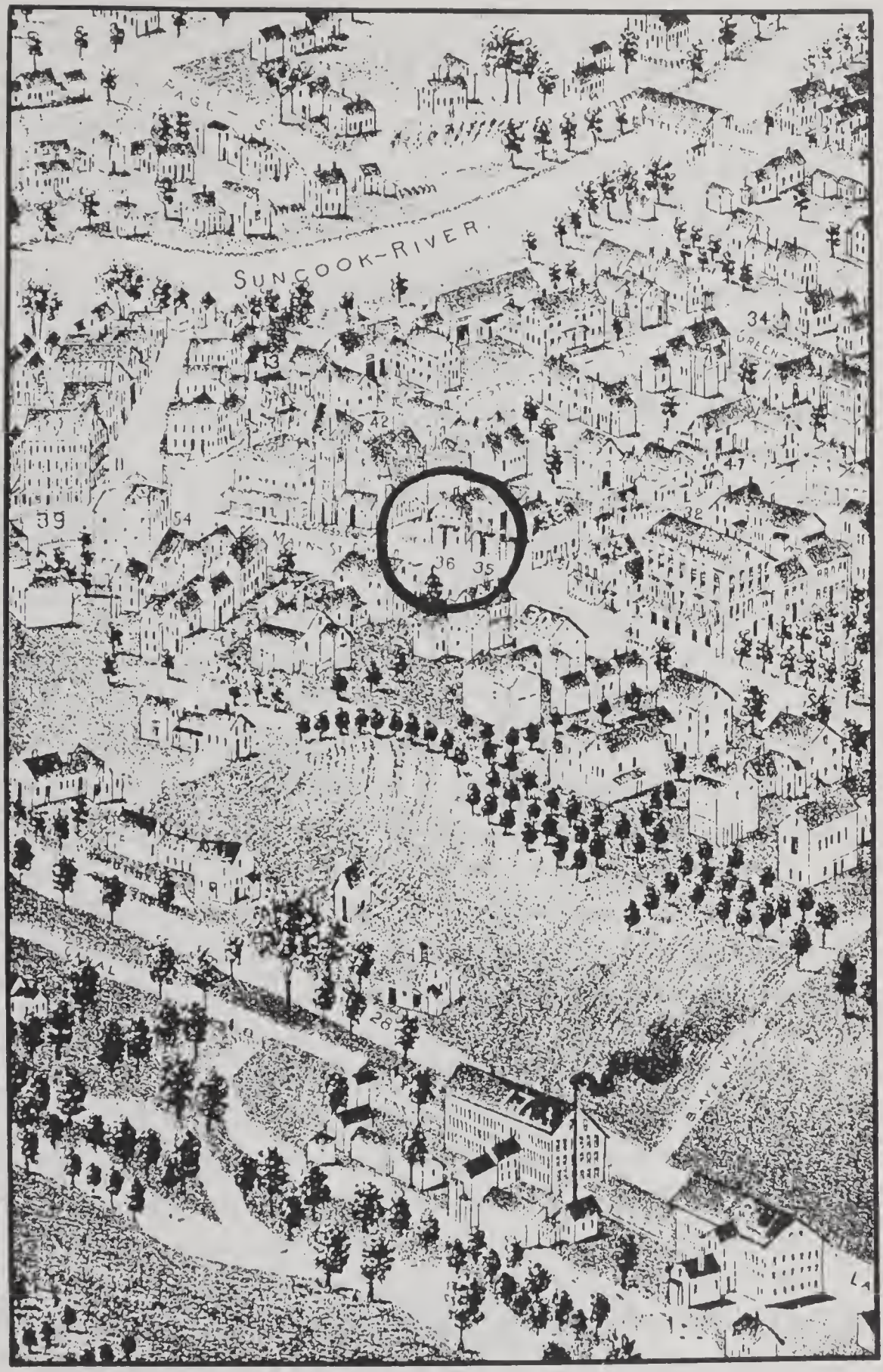
Sometime in the late 1860s, Dr. George G. Wilkins decided to add other businesses to his profession of dentistry, and he advertised his Railroad Barber Shop and his trade in animal furs and pelts. His various enterprises were conducted in a two-story white clapboard building on Main Street, to the right of the Congregational Church. In the 1870 census he is listed as a saloon keeper, with real estate worth $2,000 and personal property worth $1,000. In the 1871 edition of the *New England Business Directory* he is listed as a hairdresser, while Pittsfield's dentists are identified as J.J. Hill and John G. Ladd, the latter also being a physician. C.C. Chesney also continued to practice dentistry, and was well known for his patented false teeth, but was not listed in the directory. It was the practice of such publications to list representative businesses and tradesmen, not all of them. This and other directories of the time also identified Wilkins as a retail liquor dealer. A "G.W. Wilkins" was listed as a dealer in fresh fish. Whether this represented an erroneous listing of the second initial of the dentist is not known, but the possibility is strong, for at the time Dr. George G. Wilkins traded in animal products, including skins and furs, and raising and selling dogs, although he continued to advertise as a dentist as well. During the late 1860s and early 1870s the Washington House hotel was under the direction of A.J. Sherburne, a prosperous and well-liked member of the community.

From 1871 through 1873, Wilkins disposed of a number

A trio of large cents, each coin with the DR. G.G. WILKINS Small Letters punch on the obverse and with the date 1876 at the center of the reverse. The author believes that the carefully positioned and boldly impressed 1876 was applied to create a souvenir during the centennial year of American independence. One can envision Wilkins giving them out in change or as mementos to patrons of his saloon and restaurant. Only a few such 1876-marked cents are known.



The location (circled) of Dr. George G. Wilkins' saloon and tenement on Main Street, Pittsfield, New Hampshire, as shown on a later (1892) map.



Bird's eye view of Pittsfield, from an 1884 lithograph, five years after Dr. George G. Wilkins' death. In 1884 his building, identified as No. 36, was occupied by two businesses: J.E. Hurst, a dealer in boots and shoes, and V.S. Paige, a jeweler.

of parcels of real estate, including a tract with buildings for $350 to Harriett B. Hilliard, wife of David C.B. Hilliard, on September 29, 1871; a small plot of land for $250 to George A. Foss, on November 6, 1872; and a small piece of land for $50 to Elvira E. Cummings, wife of Joseph Cummings, on September 12, 1873.

During the early 1870s, Wilkins continued his several businesses, the main one of which was a combination saloon and restaurant, called an "eating house" in directories of the time. The selling of liquor was by town permit, and many in Pittsfield felt strongly that alcohol was the tool of satan himself. Apparently, Wilkins' license was lifted from time to time, for there are at least two records of his being hailed into court for illegally selling liquor. Court docket item No. 50, in the matter of the State vs. Wilkins, noted that on February 1, 1873, Wilkins, not being an authorized agent of the town of Pittsfield at the time, did "unlawfully, knowingly, and criminally keep for sale five gallons of spirituous liquor." Wilkins pleaded that he was unwilling to contest the State, and was fined $50 plus $9.65 costs of prosecution.

A related docket item, No. 51, the State vs. Wilkins, stated that on February 10, 1873, Wilkins, "not being an agent of the town for the purpose of selling spirit, did then and there unlawfully, knowingly, and criminally sell one glass of intoxicating liquor to one David F. Tilton." Wilkins pleaded no contest. No additional fine was levied.

Apparently, Wilkins was restored to the good graces of the town fathers, for directories for several years after 1873 continued to list him as a liquor dealer, saloon keeper, and proprietor of an eating house. Being a purveyor of spirits must have had its trying moments in Pittsfield, for on many occasions temperance meetings were held in an effort to completely outlaw liquor. His location adjacent to the Congregational Church probably did not help matters. From 1870 to 1875 *The Pittsfield Prohibition Herald* newspaper championed the cause. Later, on June 16, 1879, it was reported that

rk is resumed.

erkshire is the cellar Purcell of Pittsfield, ld himself a parson-bodied men of his con- a lift. So the other of them turned out, 's direction, commenc- shed it before night.

mencek last week be- ston, auditor, at the ton, in a suit wherein of Providence claims 000, of the Eagle Cot- ton, for short measure various lots of print and 1866. The hear- eral days.

. A. Folsom of the ce Railroad undertook g anniversary the other thought that he and his rthy of something bet- , and so they contrib- elegant ones too, cost-

nion tells the following sleeps with a compan- dry goods store became rrid nightmare, about ht, and imagined that d risen from his bed at he counter, and with a s slowly but surely n, to blow his brains rdled with horror, his quivered like an aspen overspread his coun- otruded and a sickly chilled his heart. At his bed with a shriek ir, unlocked the door, a *robe de nuit*, dashed station, appearing to -struck spectators who home from the Opera nd swiftly drawn chalk at speedily told, but in oke, and realizing his an earnest desire to sell . A patrolman went to ting and he returned e bed by his chum.

elligent black dog be- vidence Police Depart- an" is a valuable ani-

Whether at home or absent in distant States, should take

The Pittsfield Times.

JOHN WHEELER,
DOCTOR.
BARNSTEAD PARADE, N. H.

ED. B. GOULD,
Attorney and Counsellor at Law,
SUNCOOK, N. H.

AARON WHITTEMORE, JR.,
Attorney and Counsellor at Law.
All legal business will receive prompt attention.
Will, also, negotiate the sale or purchase of
REAL ESTATE.
Office over J. P. NUTTER'S Store,
PITTSFIELD, N. H.

WASHINGTON HOTEL,
MAIN STREET, PITTSFIELD, N. H.
A. J. Sherburne, Proprietor.
A good Livery Stable connected with the Hotel.

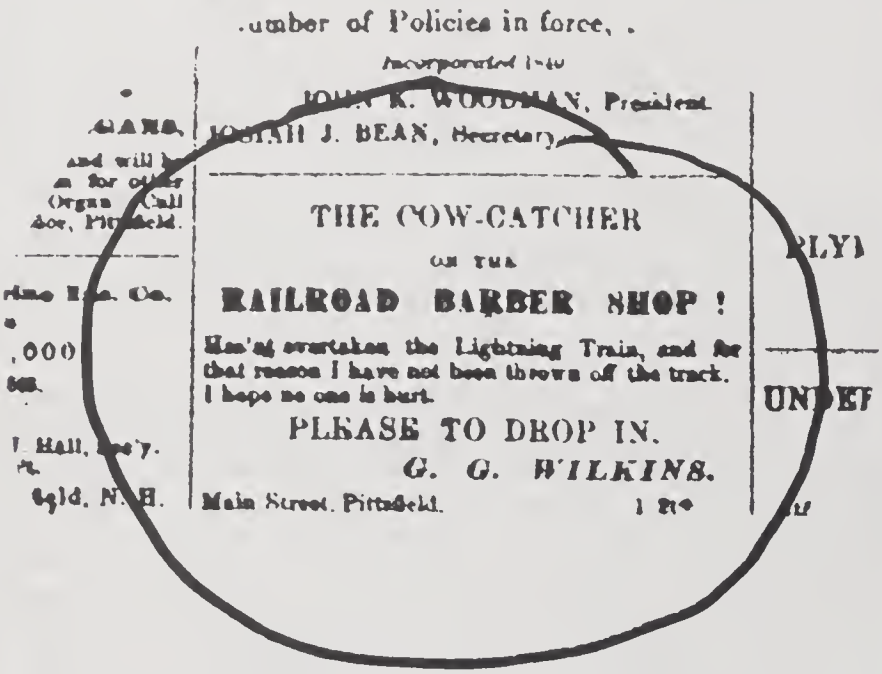
GEO. G. WILKINS,
DENTIST,
PITTSFIELD, N. H.

B. M. TILTON & CO.,
Manufacturers & Dealers in
HARNESSES,
TRUNKS,
Whips, Blankets and Collars.
NO. 14 WATER ST.,
EXETER, N. H.
BRANCH STORE,
No. 5 Water St., PITTSFIELD, N. H.

turned every things matur are the men life. People hurry general over. The t last. Slow brains out ag are injurious of competitive the field is t world. Eithe ried to exhau even to great "fagged out," than the pr good. All ru to catch up boat, are extr age and sex, ought to be th which should to run twenty who are delib measured, wh terprise witho who perform a life with ca proverbially Quakers are over.—*Dr.*

Mr. Hami has been em superintendi marine railw station on th man who sa improvising that vessel l

Wilkins' dental advertisement in *The Pittsfield Times* is adjacent to a notice for the Washington Hotel (also known as the Washington House), under the ownership of A(ndrew) J(ackson) Sherburne.



.umber of Policies in force, .

Incorporated 1849

JOHN K. WOODMAN, President.

JOSIAH J. BEAN, Secretary.

THE COW-CATCHER

ON THE

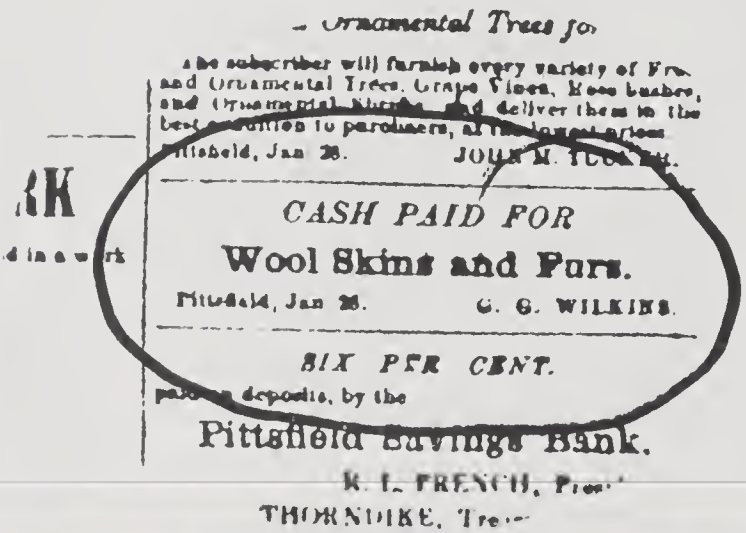
RAILROAD BARBER SHOP !

Has'ng overtaken the Lightning Train, and for that reason I have not been thrown off the track. I hope no one is hurt.

PLEASE TO DROP IN.

G. G. WILKINS.

Main Street, Pittsfield.



Ornamental Trees &c.

The subscriber will furnish every variety of Fru and Ornamental Trees, Grape Vines, Rose bushes, and Ornamental Shrubs, and deliver them in the best condition to purchasers, at the lowest prices.

Pittsfield, Jan 28. JOHN M. TUCK.

CASH PAID FOR

Wool Skins and Furs.

Pittsfield, Jan 28. G. G. WILKINS.

SIX PER CENT.

paid on deposits, by the

Pittsfield Savings Bank.

R. L. FRENCH, Pres't

THORNDIKE, Treas.

Two of Wilkins' advertisements of the late 1860s. The first, from the *Suncook Valley Times,* October 22, 1868, advertises in a whimsical way Wilkins' barbering business as the Railroad Barber Shop. The second, advertising his interest in buying skins and furs, is from the same newspaper, issue of May 6, 1869.

An 1859 Canadian large cent with PITTSFIELD, N.H. on the left side of the obverse, and DR. G.G. WILKINS TO THE RIGHT. The curvature of the Small Letters punches fits the Canadian coin design nicely, and the combination of the two punches is more graceful on the Canadian cent than with its use on United States large cents. The counterstamp was undoubtedly applied sometime during the 1864-1876 years.

An enlarged panel from a stereopticon card, slightly blurry in the foreground, showing a parade going toward the Congregational Church (partially visible to the left). Not much detail can be seen in the picture. On the reverse of the original image an earlier owner identified it as being photographed in May 1868, which would place the view during the era when Wilkins acquired the wooden frame structure immediately to the right of the church.

An early view of the Tuttle-Kaime Block before the French mansard-style roof was added (see subsequent photograph). To the right is the Congregational Church, and barely visible to the extreme right is the wooden frame structure purchased by Dr. George G. Wilkins.

Views showing the Tuttle-Kaime Block, also known as the Thorndike Block, with French mansard-style roof, before the February 4, 1876 fire. Dr. C.C. Chesley had his dentistry office on the front left corner on the second floor. H.A. Tuttle, B.S. Kaime, and H.L. Brown occupied the ground floor. Among the ballyhoo-type signs in Tuttle's window is one with the inscription: "Cheaper Than the Cheapest."

To the right is the Congregational Church, and further to the right is "Fort Wilkins." Note that the Wilkins building at this point did not have the false front on it.

Enlarged view from the preceding photograph, showing Wilkins' building, with the Congregational Church to the left.

following a campaign sponsored by the Congregational Church and various temperance advocates, nearly 1,000 people signed "the pledge"—an astounding number which represented more than half of the town's population!

By 1871, Wilkins was involved in the patent medicine field. "Pure Bear's Oil," put up in glass vials with paper labels, had many beneficial uses, or so it was claimed. At the same time, he continued to run numerous advertisements stating "Cash Paid for Wool, Skins & Furs." A sturdy iron cage containing a live bear was exhibited in front of his saloon from time to time, attracting considerable notice from passers by. Not satisfied with his diverse enterprises, Wilkins expanded into selling rifles, handguns, and ammunition, causing his combination store, eating house, saloon, fur depot, and patent medicine dispensary to be referred to as "Fort Wilkins" by local residents.

In the meantime the career of Dr. George G. Wilkins was getting curiouser and curiouser, as Lewis Carroll might have said. Under the heading of "Pittsfield News," a local newspaper, *The Pittsfield Weekly Star*, unfolded a tale in several installments:

"ARRESTED. Dr. G.G. Wilkins was arrested by Sheriff Frank B. Berry, Friday noon, on complaint of A.J. Sherburne for attempting to set his barn on fire. The preliminary trial is to be held before the police court in Concord today. Hon. John Y. Mugridge is attorney for the prosecution. We omit this week expressing any opinion of our own in regard to Wilkins' charge or his probable or improbable design to fire or cause to be fired the buildings of Mr. Sherburne. Next week we may publish facts which will startle this community with wonderment and indignation."

Appended to the notice was the affidavit of Charles F. Sewell, dated March 25, 1874, Pittsfield:

"This is to certify that on the 17th of February 1874 I came to work for Dr. Geo. G. Wilkins of Pittsfield, and worked for him just one month. While I worked for and stayed with

View of Main Street before the February 14, 1876 fire, showing Wilkins' building with a horse and buggy in the street in front. The photographer was H.W. Osgood, who published numerous stereopticon cards, and probably dates from the early 1870s. At the time, Dr. George G. Wilkins was engaged in many commercial activities, including dentistry, purveying patent medicine, selling firearms and ammunition, barbering, trading in animal furs, and, prime in importance, operating a saloon. The structure was referred to as "Fort Wilkins" by local residents.

Wilkins he at three different times offered me $100 if I would go at night and set the barn of A.J. Sherburne on fire. The first time Wilkins made this offer was Sunday night, February 22nd, 1874.

"He, Wilkins, made the same offer to me the two following nights, February 23 and February 24. He, Wilkins, counted out the money amounting to $100 in ten $10 bills and wanted me to take the money for setting Mr. Sherburne's barn on fire. I refused at each time to accept his money or proposition. On Monday night the 16th of March, 1874, Wilkins told me in the hearing of Celicia (sic) C. Colby that he, Wilkins, could if he was obliged to, prove who the man was who set A.J. Sherburne's house on fire which was situated in Chichester, N.H. seven years ago; Wilkins said the man who set Sherburne's house on fire went back on him (Wilkins), and he wanted to punish him, the incendiary man. Wilkins told me that he had a receipt for making combustible material with which to set buildings on fire; he said it cost him $100. Wilkins showed me in a box upstairs in his saloon the different things this receipt is made of; Wilkins said his was the same stuff that was used to set Sherburne's buildings on fire. Wilkins wanted me to set Sherburne's barn on fire with this same material. Wilkins said I could leave this combustible stuff in Sherburne's barn somewhere; the stuff was to be well wet, and when it got dry it would blaze into fire; it might take two days for this fire material to become fire, so Wilkins said. Wilkins I found to be a dangerous man and I concluded to leave him as soon as possible. Wilkins called Jack Sherburne all kinds of mean names. Wilkins abused a great many people whom I do not know in Pittsfield.

"These statements I am ready to swear to in any court of justice in the United States.

"Charles F. Sewell."

Another article followed:

"DR. G.G. WILKINS, who was arrested last week on the charge of attempting to hire Charles F. Sewell to burn the barn of A.J. Sherburne, was put under bond of $2,000 by Judge Dana of Concord, to appear next Monday for trial. Benjamin Parsons and Isaac E. Smith stood bondsmen for the 'Doctor' for a consideration of course. Mr. Charles F. Sewell, of Tilton, N.H., who published an affidavit in the Star last week alleging that Dr. Wilkins tried to hire him to fire Mr. Sherburne's building, we learn from reliable parties in Tilton, to be a young man of truth and veracity, and whose evidence cannot be impeached. We have no ill feelings or animosity against Dr. Wilkins and hope if he is innocent he will be discharged and vindicated; if he is guilty of the charge alleged against him, we wish, and so does the public, to see him punished according to law. Many stories of Dr. Wilkins past career in crime and depredations have been brought to our notice during the past week. We will not now give publicity save to one of these reports until we determine their accuracy and truth.

"We deem it due to the public to publish the statement of Mr. Charles B. Leavitt, who runs the stage line from this town to Dover. Mr. Leavitt is a gentleman widely respected for his manly traits of character and a gentleman who would not willfully slander or wrong another. Mr. Leavitt declares that Dr. Wilkins offered him counterfeit money for fifty cents on the dollar; Mr. Leavitt stands willing to testify to this fact any time; Dr. Wilkins showed him a large quantity of counterfeit money—some in two, five, and ten dollar bills."

A subsequent article continued the tale:

"THE WILKINS CASE. Dr. G.G. Wilkins was arraigned before Judge Dana of Concord on Monday last on the charge of attempting to burn the buildings of Mr. A.J. Sherburne.

"Charles F. Sewell testified substantially to the same facts he published two weeks ago in the Star. . . . Sewell was cross-examined by John H. Albin, Esq., a young lawyer of marked ability who was counsel for the defendant. The cross-

examination did not change Sewell's evidence in the least, which was strong and sufficient to have the bonds of Wilkins raised from $2,000 to $2,800 and brought the case before the Grand Jury on the following day, Tuesday. Hon. John Y. Mugridge, one of the ablest lawyers in the state, who was counsel for Mr. Sherburne, made a brief speech, in which he literally riddled, with telling sarcastic and truthful logic, the record and villainous character of Wilkins. Mugridge said he knew the reputation of 'Dr. Wilkins of Pittsfield for fifteen years, and hell was too good a place for him.'

"For some strange reason, the Grand Jury did not find an indictment against Dr. Wilkins; it is a matter of surprise to Mr. Mugridge and experienced lawyers, and in fact to all persons versed in judicial proceedings, that the Grand Jury failed to find an indictment. The well known fact that Dr. Wilkins is vindictive and revengeful towards Mr. Sherburne as he is to all he dislikes and differs with on any matter, inclines Mr. Sherburne to believe and also the best people of this community, that he conspired willfully and maliciously to burn Mr. Sherburne's building. We hope Dr. Wilkins never did desire or endeavor to burn anybody's buildings; but his disposition is of such a violent and diabolical nature against any person with whom he is at variance, that those who know him best believe he would not hesitate to seek revenge. Some timid people here fear Dr. Wilkins and well they may. Andrew J. Sherburne does not fear nor love him, dead or alive. Yesterday we were partially informed why the Grand Jury did not indict Wilkins, but withold the reason until we make further inquiries and investigations."

Next came this article:

"FORT WILKINS. Press of more important matter obliges us to leave the biographical sketch of the hero of Fort Wilkins over again. It comprehends the degraded life and licentious crimes unequalled by an Italian bandit, for the past 40 years. In the meantime let all in this community, especially those whom the hero of Fort Wilkins hates or has a grudge against,

be on their guard lest their houses, barns, and property be set on fire."

A further article continued the saga:

" 'DOCTOR' WILKINS ON THE RAMPAGE. The notorious 'Dr.' Wilkins of this town is again at his old tricks; he spends most of his time slandering some of his neighbors; women and men alike have to be assailed by his ever venomous tongue; even good people with whom the 'Doctor' pretends to be friendly he will abuse and stab them Brutus-like behind their backs. It seems to be the chief enjoyment of the 'Doctor' to trap somebody with ridicule, detriment, or injury directly or indirectly by word or deed. He carries on this work of defaming and debasing all whom he can with such cunning, artful and cynic-like plots, that many people here are actually afraid of him. Let some fear him if they may, but we wish to tell Doctor Wilkins that we do not fear him any more than we fear any other fraud and shall show him up from time to time to be a monstrous fraud.

"Wilkins is very busy just now circulating the story that Mr. A.J. Sherburne and Chas. F. Sewell put up the job of arresting him for attempting to fire buildings. Every person knowing Mr. A.J. Sherburne knows that this story is false as Lucifer. Mr. Sherburne did not know Chas. F. Sewell and never spoke to him while Sewell was working for Wilkins; as Sewell was on his way to the depot to leave Pittsfield after being done with Wilkins, he called at Mr. Sherburne's to tell him of the incendiary designs, etc. Mr. Sherburne was in Manchester, then Sewell took the train for Tilton. He met on the train Solon Proctor and told him how Wilkins tried to hire him to fire Sherburne's buildings. Solon Proctor met Sherburne in Manchester and told him what he heard, etc. Mr. Sherburne took the train for Concord, expecting to find Sewell there; he took Solon Proctor along with him so as to show him Sewell, for Mr. Sherburne did not know Sewell. Sewell had taken the train to Tilton from Concord before Sherburne and Proctor arrived. Sewell was

View of Main Street showing the new Congregational Church erected in 1876 and dedicated in 1877. To the left is the Union Block, built in 1876, and without the third-story addition built in 1895. A close view of the original photograph shows a sign depicting a jeweler's watch in the building earlier owned by Wilkins, indicating that it may have been a jewelry store at that time.

written after to come back to Pittsfield and did so and this was the first time Sewell and Sherburne ever met to speak or to know each other.

"These are the actual facts of the commencement of the Wilkins rumpus and we challenge anyone to prove the reverse. Here it will be seen that the meeting and hearing of Sewell's story was accidental and hence there could not be a put-up job of Sherburne and Sewell to prosecute Wilkins. If this was the case the job would have been arranged before Sewell got ready to leave Pittsfield; Sherburne would have known Sewell before and when he wanted to see Sewell about the matter, he would not be in Manchester. Why did Wilkins give ten dollars to Chas. Brown of Gilmanton Corner to carry off Sewell out of A.J. Sherburne's reach? Why did Wilkins offer $25 more to Brown to keep Sewell entirely away? Brown and others are ready as witnesses."

The Pittsfield Weekly Star was discontinued in the same year; otherwise we might know more about the notorious Doctor (or "Doctor," as the paper was fond of phrasing it) Wilkins. Apparently, Wilkins made threats to the paper, for later a correspondent expressed the wish that the journal would acquire a fearless editor.

Another paper, *The Pittsfield Times*, in 1875, the last year of its existence, was kinder in several references to Wilkins, including a filler in the September 2, 1875 issue: "Dr. Wilkins does quite a business in the dog line," and one in the October 7th issue: "J.C. (sic) Wilkins of Milford, brother to 'our Dr.' of canine notoriety, found honey in the woods."

Little was recorded of Wilkins' later activities. It is known that he counterstamped cents as late as 1873, and although such pieces were marked DR. G.G. WILKINS, he was no longer "doctoring" as his main line of endeavor. The several large cents known with the date or number 1876 on the reverse suggest he may have counterstamped these in the centennial year, a time in which countless souvenirs and remembrances were created all across America. Directories

PITTSFIELD NEWS.

Arrested.

Dr. G. G. Wilkins was arrested by Sheriff Frank B. Berry, Friday noon on complaint of A. J. Sherburne for attempting to set his (Sherburne's) barn on fire. The preliminary trial is to be held before the police court in Concord today. Hon John Y. Mugridge is attoney for the prosecution. We omit this week expressing any opinion of our own in regard to Wilkins' charge or his probable or improbable design to fire or caused to be fired the buildings of Mr. Sherburne. Next week we may publish facts which will startle this community with wooderment andindignation.

Pittsfield, N. H. Mar. 25th, 1874.

This is to certify that on the of Feb. 1874. I came to wor' Dr. Geo. G. Wilkins of Pi' and worked for him just one While I worked for and sta' Wilkins he at three differe fered me ($100) one hur if I would go at night barn of A. J. Sherbur first time Wilkins n was Sunday night F

He, Wilkins,mad offer again to me ... following nights Feb. 23 and 24. He, Wilkins, counted out the money amounting to $100 in ten $10 bills and wanted me to take the money for setting Mr.Sherburne's barn on fire. I refused at each time to accept his money or proposition. On Monday night the 16th of March, 1874, ...d me in the hearing of ... Wilkins.

Fort Wilkins.

Press of more important matter obliges us to leave the biographical sketch of the hero of Fort Wilkins over again. It comprehends the degraded life and licentious crimes unequalled by an Italian bandit, for the past 40 years. In the mean time let all in this community, especially those whom the hero of Fort Wilkins hates or has a grudge against, be on their guard lest their houses, barns and property be set on fire.

Excerpts from two of the many news articles concerning Wilkins which appeared in *The Pittsfield Weekly Star* in 1874.

continued to list Wilkins as the proprietor of an eating house in Pittsfield through 1879, while newspaper and other advertisements proclaimed his fur trading, medicine hawking, and firearms selling endeavors. Presumably, he had as many enemies as ever.

As time went by, Wilkins took to drinking quantities of his own products, and as early as 1876 he sought treatment for alcoholism. His condition worsened with other illnesses, and by autumn 1879 he was bedridden under the nursing care of Nellie Mack.

On September 17, 1879 he dictated his will, signing it in a shaky hand in the presence of witnesses. The text follows:

"I, George G. Wilkins of Pittsfield in the county of Merrimack and State of New Hampshire, do make this my last will and testament.

"First. I order and direct my Executor herein named to pay all my just debts and funeral charges soon as may be after my decease.

"Second. I give and bequeath my brothers Joel F. Wilkins and Manly W. Wilkins and to my sisters Marietta A. Wilkins and Sarah S. Wilkins the sum of one dollar each. I also give and bequeath unto the heirs of my deceased brothers, James F. Wilkins and Clark A. Wilkins, the sum of two dollars to be equally divided between them.

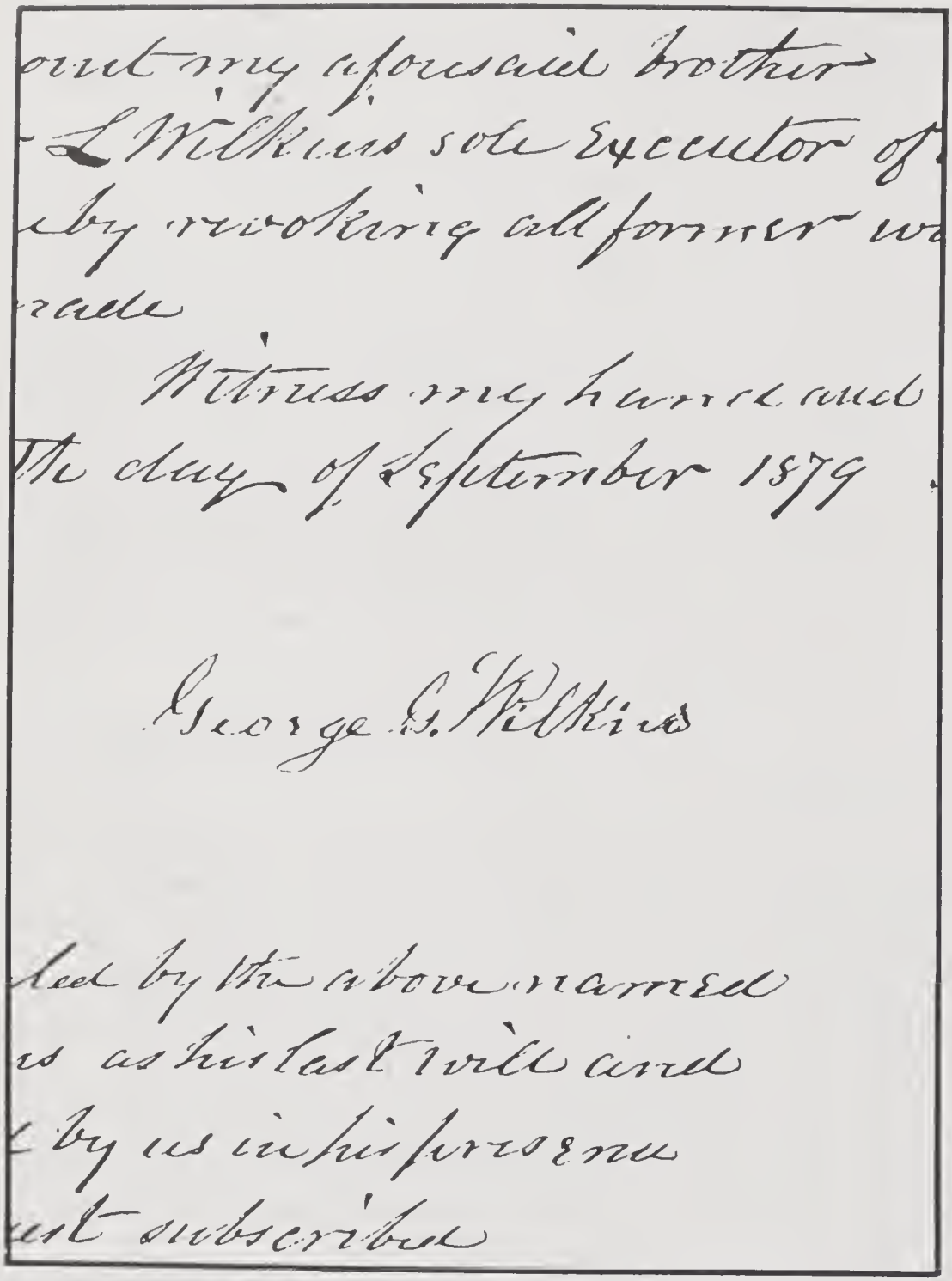
"Third. I give, bequeath and devise to my brother Walter L. Wilkins and his heirs forever all the residue of my estate, whether real or personal, wherever found or however situated.

"Fourth. I appoint my aforesaid brother Walter L. Wilkins sole executor of this will hereby revoking all former wills by me made.

"Witness my hand and seal this seventeenth day of September 1879.

"(Signed) George G. Wilkins."

The will was witnessed by John L. French, William H. Berry, and Benjamin G. Parsons.



ount my aforesaid brother
L Wilkins sole Executor of
by revoking all former wi
made

Witness my hand and
the day of September 1879

George G. Wilkins

ed by the above named
as his last will and
by us in his presence
est subscribed

A portion of the last page of George G. Wilkins' will shows his signature in shaky script. The rest of the document was transcribed by someone else.

On November 8, 1879 he died, thus ending the career of one of Pittsfield's most controversial citizens, and one of the strangest figures in the footnotes of numismatics. Few if any in Pittsfield mourned his passing. Funeral arrangements were handled by Lewis Bunker, who billed the estate for $58 for the casket and body preparation. Apparently, no one thought to order a headstone, or at least the estate did not pay for one.

An obituary appeared in the Concord *Independent Statesman*, issue of November 13:

"PITTSFIELD. Dr. G.G. Wilkins died here on Saturday morning, of dropsy, from which he had suffered for more than a year. He owned and occupied a building next to the Congregational Church, where he acted as a dentist, barber, saloon keeper, and dealer in various articles. He was a decided character in his line. He has resided here about twenty years, and will be missed from his peculiar sphere."

Walter L. Wilkins, named as executor of the estate, declined the trust. The court appointed John L. French, Pittsfield's leading auctioneer and appraiser, to administer the estate, along with Theophilus B. Martin and N.E. Martin, both of Concord. William H. Berry, Hiram A. Tuttle, and Reuben S. French were commissioned to appraise the estate.

An inventory of the estate, dated November 12, 1879, was submitted by Berry, Tuttle, and French, and showed real estate valued at $2,255, with the "saloon and tenement on Main Street" comprising $1,200 of that amount. Household furniture was appraised at $59.80, clothing for $1.50, and produce, consisting of 30 bushels of roots and a quantity of hay, at $9. Wilkins' "stock in trade," or commercial goods for use and sale, totaled $190.43 and included 10 revolvers, 18 razors, two watches and chains, 13 glass and three rubber syringes, a horse tooth saw (apparently his dental practice was quite diversified!), 56 bottle stoppers, a police badge, miscellaneous gold and silver articles, dog grooming accessories, 22 cans of baked beans, three cans of strawberries,

View of a parade down Main Street, 1895 or later, for the Union Block shown at the extreme left has its third-story addition (which was added in 1895). "Fort Wilkins" has been modernized, shutters have been added to the windows, and a false front faces the street.

View of Main Street, circa 1910, about 30 years after Wilkins' death. The building formerly owned by him, with a false wooden front added, can be seen to the right of the Congregational Church and just below the shorter of the two church steeples. To the left of the church is the three-story Union Block, showing the third story, which was added in 1895. The Union Block was built in 1876, and was probably derived its name from the centennial of the Union, replacing an earlier structure on that site which was destroyed by fire on February 14, 1876.

a violin, 22 packs of playing cards, 12 boxes of trick cards, 20 boxes of cartridges, 20 bins of soap, 575 cigars, six packs of filter paper, 43 papers of tobacco, bottles and tumblers, a dog, eight and one half barrels of vinegar, 13 barrels of cider plus extra barrels, and various other articles.

Additional items grouped as "miscellaneous articles," valued at $123.30, included a $10 harness, a $30 buggy wagon, a $10 sleigh, medical scales, a $20 iron safe (wonder how many counterstamped coins it once contained?), a bear cage, a medical chest with contents, a beer pump, and $30 worth of firewood.

Further estate items included a horse valued at $50, dentistry and other tools listed at $12, and $1,354.13 in cash. No bank deposits or securities were found. The total personal items came to $1,800.16, plus $2,255 worth of real estate.

In June 1882, as the estate was about to be disbursed, a final accounting revealed that William H. Berry had paid $88.50 and that others had paid $189 in rent on Wilkins' real estate, and that proceeds invested and the interest on his cash hoard amounted to $153.75. Against the assets of the estate, $853.13 was charged for the payment of debts and for administrative expenses. Included were such items as $100 paid to Nellie Mack for nursing care in Wilkins' final months, $123.50 to Dr. J.G. Gurney for medical attention, and small sums to three other doctors, plus payments for real estate taxes and insurance.

In the meantime, on October 12, 1880 the will was contested by two siblings, Manly W. Wilkins, who lived in Lewiston, Maine, and Marietta A. (Wilkins) Smith, of Boston, who claimed that the will was probated without due notice and that they were the "heirs at law of the said George G. Wilkins." On March 3, 1881, Marietta A. Smith filed a further contest, stating that the will was not signed (untrue) and "at the time of execution of said instrument the said George G. Wilkins was not of sound and disposing mind and memory, and was wholly incapable of making a valid

will, from the impairment of his faculties by reason of old age, of sickness, intoxication, and other causes."

On November 9, 1880, Sarah S. Wilkins (Mrs. John Temple), of Boston, who was "reputed to be insane" according to a court report, laid claim against the estate through Aaron Whittemore, Jr., a Pittsfield attorney.

The disposition of the adverse claims is not known, but it is believed that the bulk of the estate went to the intended brother, Walter L. Wilkins.

In later years, the memory of George G. Wilkins faded. Published histories of Merrimack County and of Pittsfield omit mention of the person who was probably the area's most controversial citizen. Upon being queried on the subject, a New Hampshire historian asked the author, "Who would *want* to remember him?"

Today, he is remembered only by numismatists, especially by those interested in store cards and counterstamps, as the most prolific counterstamper the country has ever known. The hundreds of cents, large and small, and coins of other denominations with his DR. G.G. WILKINS mark, a few also with PITTSFIELD, N.H., remain in collections across the land as souvenirs of this colorful character from the past.

VIEWS OF PITTSFIELD taken in March 1987 show landmarks which have survived from Dr. George G. Wilkins' era.

View toward the commercial center from a hillside. In the center is a structure which over a century ago housed the Pittsfield Cotton Mills. Behind it is the steeple of the Congregational Church, while visible above the left side of the factory is the Washington House.

The former residence of Hiram A. Tuttle, Pittsfield's leading merchant in the 19th century, who served a term as governor of the state. In 1987 Perkins Funeral Home was located there.

The Washington House hotel, which has been added to over the years, is still the landmark it was in the last century. From the lowest level to the highest, it now comprises five floors of space. To the right on the corner a portion of the Union Block is visible.

Main Street, showing the Congregational Church, built in 1876. To the right is the two-story wooden frame building known as "Fort Wilkins" in the 1870s.

"Fort Wilkins" as it appeared in March 1987, now the home of a beauty parlor, Judy's Style Inn. After Wilkins' death in 1879, the structure saw many uses, including a boot and shoe store, jewelry shop, barber shop, and, beauty parlor.

APPENDIX

Contents of the Estate of George G. Wilkins

Inventoried November 12, 1879

Real Estate

Saloon and tenement on Main Street	$1,200.00
Land on Elm Street	300.00
Cottage on Chestnut Street	400.00
Stable and land	200.00
Two house lots on Wilkins Street	125.00
Land on Catamount St.	30.00
Whole amount of real estate	$2,255.00

Household Furniture

Tassels and cord	$0.28
Table cover	.20
Table	.25
Table and stand	.50
Two buckets	.30
Six office chairs	4.50
Stove and funnel	4.00
Block	1.00
16 pictures and frames	1.25
Two wood blinds	1.00
Bottles and contents and tumblers	1.00
Ice chest	1.00
Ice tools	.50
Ice chest	1.00
Rocking chair	1.50
Table	.25
Five chairs	1.00
Cupboard	1.50
1 [blank; no entry]	.37
Clothes closet	2.50
Cooking stove	2.50
Stove furniture	2.00
Crockery and tin-ware	3.00
Knives, forks and [illegible]	.50
Three water pails	.30
Three stone jars	.75
Four bed lamps	.10
Three wash tubs	.50
Meal chest	.75
Grain chest	.50
Spittoon	.25
Bedstead and mattresses	1.00

Bedstead, spring and mattresses	4.00
Seven quilts	2.50
Pair blankets	1.00
Dry sink	.50
Stand	1.00
Loungee	.25
Four chairs	1.00
Two chairs	1.00
Cupboard	.50
Table	.50
Three chairs	.60
Bed and bedding	5.00
Three curtains and pictures	.50
One bed and bedding	2.50
Three chairs	.60
Butter jars and jugs	2.00
Two fly traps and covers	.50
Total household furniture	$59.80

Clothing

Clothing	$1.50

Produce

30 bushels roots	$6.00
Hay	3.00
Total Produce	$9.00

Stock in Trade

Two revolvers	$4.00
Eight revolvers	8.00
18 razors	1.80
Two watches and chains	16.00
11 glass syringes	.44
Three rubber syringes	1.50
Knife	.75
Two pairs scissors	.30
Horse tooth saw	.75
10 pencils	.40
Hair brush	.10
Two glass syringes	.25
Bracelet	.10
Stone hone	.50
50 bottle stops	1.00
Six bottle stops	.25
Book	.10
Two knives	.20
Barber brush	.10
Two bottles hair oil	1.00
Watch	1.50
Two gold rings	13.05
Police badge	1.25
Gold beads	12.60

Old silver	2.50
Old gold	6.37
Old gold pins	3.00
Gold foil	.25
Bottles and mugs	1.50
Dog collars	.30
Two brushes	.20
Five razor straps	.40
Teeth pricks	.50
Six rubber combs	.12
Nine lather brushes	.90
Serving silk	.50
Show case	1.00
Hammer	.50
Vise	1.00
22 cans baked beans	2.20
Three cans strawberries	.30
Matches and tips	.50
Violin	1.50
13 packs cards	.25
Nine packs cards	1.00
20 boxes cartridges	3.00
12 boxes trick cards	.24
Four boxes faucets	1.00
Cans and confectionery	1.00
[indistinct] of old keys	.25
20 bins soap	4.00
Six packs filter paper	.25
175 cigars	3.50
100 cigars	5.00
100 cigars	.25
100 cigars	.75
100 cigars	3.00
43 papers tobacco	.86
8½ [pounds?] tobacco	2.55
Dog collars, etc.	1.00
Tobacco cutter	.50
Corks	.25
Horse clipper	1.00
Boot jacket and faucets	.25
Tumblers	.50
Six tumblers	.30
Bottle and contents	.50
Six box [illegible]	1.50
[Illegible]	1.00
Pair steel [illegible]	.25
Lamps and lanterns	.50
Hand [illegible] gloves	.25
Four bushels	1.00
Grindstone	1.00
[Illegible] and straps	.50
Copper pump and [illegible]	2.00
Dog	2.00
[Illegible]	.50

Cage	.25
Webbing	.25
Saw horse	.25
8½ barrels vinegar	25.00
13 barrels cider and barrels	26.00
Three empty barrels and 2 kegs	3.50
Total stock in trade	$190.43

Miscellaneous Articles

Harness	10.00
Bridle and fetters	1.50
Buggy wagon	30.00
Wrench	.40
Sleigh	10.00
Pair scales	4.00
Robes	3.50
Medical scales	5.00
Whips, blankets and curry combs	1.00
Bridle and halter	.40
Saddle	1.50
Beer pump	.50
Medical chest and contents	1.50
Pair scales	.50
[Illegible] of firewood	30.00
Bear cage	2.00
Wheelbarrow	1.50
Iron safe	20.00
Total Miscellaneous Articles	$123.30

Livestock

Horse	$50.00

Farming Utensils and Mechanics Tools

Dentistry tools	$5.00
Shovel, fork and hoe	1.00
Carpenters tools	5.00
Shovel, hoe and axes	1.00
Total Utensils and Tools	$12.00

Deposited in savings institutions	0.00
Stock in banks and other corp	0.00
Notes, bonds and book accounts	0.00
Cash on hand	$1,354.13
Total personal estate	$1,800.16

The sums of certain lists do not precisely equal the totals given (all figures are from court documents). Apparently, the arithmetic was never checked!

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